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For Zang Fengyu, an old friend

Preface

What a difference a crisis makes. As I write this preface, the year that was (2020) challenged the world with the COVID-19 pandemic. And which countries stood tall, mobilizing effective measures to contain the pandemic until vaccines could be produced? China, Vietnam, Cuba, Laos, and other socialist countries. Clearly, their political systems have matured to a point at which they can make rapid decisions, enact mechanisms for the speedy deployment of specialists and core personnel, redirect industry to produce much-needed equipment, and count on society-wide cooperation and support. I hardly need to point out that—with very rare exceptions—countries that draw upon the Western liberal tradition, with its bourgeois (capitalist) political structures and its cultural assumptions of the primacy of the private individual, have foundered and struggled mightily to put together anything that looks like a coherent approach to the pandemic.

What is it about the political structures of socialist countries that has enabled such a success? This book is at least part of an answer: we need to go back to the roots of the Marxist tradition to identify the initial principles of socialist governance. The one who made such a contribution was Friedrich Engels. Yes, Engels, the man who so often plays second fiddle to Marx has far more to offer on this question than many may expect. This is as true of the theory of hitherto existing forms of the state as it is of the form of socialist governance that should develop after a proletarian revolution. This is what the book offers: a careful reading of oft-neglected texts by Engels, with a view to determining the principles of socialist governance.

Why 'socialist governance' and not, for example, socialist politics or the socialist state? Those infused with Western liberal assumptions and indeed Western Marxism may find that the terminology of 'governance' belongs more to the domain of management studies and such like. However, I have chosen the term 'socialist governance' carefully. Why? To begin with, for Engels, the idea of a socialist state would be an oxymoron. Since he saw any form of the state as a separated public power, and since he proposed that in a socialist system a public power would—by contrast—be enmeshed within society, I could not use the terminology of a 'socialist state.' Further, since both Engels and Marx define politics in terms of the manifestation of class struggle and propose depoliticized elections and consultations in a socialist system, 'socialist politics' would also not be appropriate. Hence, the terminology

of socialist governance, which captures best the basic principles Engels espoused. One final reason: the English translation of three important volumes by Xi Jinping is *The Governance of China* (*zhiguolizheng*). The Chinese may also be translated as 'manage state affairs' or 'governing a country.' This book's title is also meant to reflect such a usage and indeed a notable continuity from Engels to China today.

The research embodied in this book has benefited from guidance, suggestions, criticism and encouragement of many. They include Zhang Shuangli, Domenico Losurdo, Yang Huilin, Hong Xiaonan, Fang Yumei, Liu Guixiang, Yan Ping, Dick Boer, Yu Min, Zhou Dan, Stefano Azzarà, and particularly an old friend, Zang Fengyu. All through, Christina has been intimately involved with the thoughts developed here, as we discuss almost daily her projects and mine—all in light of our common project.

Christiansfeld, Southern Jutland, Denmark
February 2021

Roland Boer

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About the Author

Roland Boer is a professor of Marxist philosophy in the School of Marxism, Dalian University of Technology, China. He is the first non-Chinese citizen to be employed in a School of Marxism in China. Among numerous publications, he is the author of the five-volume work, *The Criticism of Heaven and Earth* (Brill, 2007–2014). In 2014, the work was awarded the Isaac and Tamara Deutscher Memorial Prize. Most recently, he has published *Socialism with Chinese Characteristics—A Guide for Foreigners* (Springer, 2021).

Abbreviations

IWMA	International Working Men's Association.
MECW	*Marx and Engels Collected Works.* 50 volumes. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1975–2004.
MEGA	*Marx-Engels Gesamtaugabe.* First series (MEGA^1) published 13 volumes from 1927 to 1941, at the Marx-Engels-Verlag in Berlin. Second series (MEGA^2) began in 1975, republishing the earlier volumes and expanding the collection. Initially published by by Dietz Verlag in Berlin until 1990, and then by Akademie Verlag in Berlin. The planned collection of 114 volumes remains incomplete.
MEW	*Marx-Engels Werke.* 44 volumes. Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1956–2018.
SPD	*Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands.*

Chapter 1
Introduction and Synopsis

Abstract The introductory chapter sets the scene by identifying the reason why this study has been undertaken and how I do so. As to why, it constitutes a search for understanding the nature of socialist governance today, especially in China. As to how, I return to the foundational texts of the Marxist tradition, finding that it is Engels in particular who provides the most comprehensive framework. After a brief word on the inadequacies of the existing and relatively sparse secondary literature, the chapter offers a detailed synopsis of each of the chapters to follow. I close with a word on the method of citations, in which I cite the original language source first and then the English translation for ease of reference—even if the translations offered are mostly my own.

Keywords Friedrich Engels · Socialist governance · Citation method · Secondary literature · Synopsis

1.1 Opening Remarks

It has been apparent to me for some time that the governing system of the socialist country I know best—China—is more mature and increasingly superior to the bourgeois states that derive from Western Europe. How to make sense of this awareness and the empirical reality on the ground? One may consider how a socialist system like that of China responded to the COVID-19 pandemic, or one may delve deep into the structures of governance, society, and economy, as I have done in a work entitled *Socialism with Chinese Characteristics—A Guide for Foreigners*. Or one may give anecdotal accounts of personal day-to-day experiences, which I have also done from time to time.

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1.2 Why Engels?

The approach taken in this present work is different. I decided to return to the roots of the Marxist tradition, to the texts of Marx and Engels to see what they had to say about the shape of governance that might unfold after a proletarian revolution. It is a leitmotiv of Marxist scholarship that Marx did not write a systematic work on the state. One may perhaps write an article or chapter on what he did and did not say (Boer 2019), but beyond that there is nothing much. The more I undertook the research the more I realised that it is Engels who has far more to offer than Marx's relatively cryptic formulations. Indeed, Engels is the one—particularly in the relatively unstudied material written in the 1880s and early 1890s—who provides the main groundwork for a historical and dialectical materialist theory of the state. More than the state, which he defines as a separated public power, for he also provides the basic philosophical principles for what may be called socialist governance. On this type of governance, Marx left us with an unresolved contradiction, between the Paris commune and the dictatorship of the proletariat. He made some tentative moves to resolve the contradiction, but his energy was on other projects rather than the state as such. It fell to Engels to develop such a theory, especially when Marx's energy had waned and after he died in 1883. This book is an effort to explicate this theory in light of all the relevant material. Yes, *all*: this effort means that the book has some quite detailed analyses of key texts, but this is the only way to gain a complete sense of what Engels tried to convey.

Rather than leaving the question begging to the very end, let me state here what Engels proposes concerning socialist governance. It entails that public power (*Gewalt*—a term we will meet frequently) loses its political character and focuses on the administration of the stuff of life and conduct of the economy for the good of the whole community (*Gemeinwesen*). This means that such a public power stands in the midst of society, rather than separate from and opposed to it. Far from being simpler and local (as the Anarchists would have it), this approach is even more complex and detailed than anything we have seen before, so much so that it constitutes a whole new level of authority, sovereignty and power. This is not all, for in extensive research later in life, especially into the German 'Mark', Engels argued for a dialectical transformation, an *Aufhebung* to a whole new qualitative level, of original or baseline communism and its democracy. These concise points require a significant amount of explanation and exegesis of Engels's texts in order to show how he arrives at such formulations.

1.3 Secondary Literature

In a moment, I will offer an outline of the arguments of each of the chapters of the book, but first a word on secondary literature. It is quite sparse, particularly work that

focuses on Engels's distinct contribution.[1] Most of the material available focuses on Marx, with either dismissals of Engels's contribution or at most deploying Engels to fill in some gaps.[2] Further, the works referenced here tend to be highly selective in the range of texts discussed, with the result that the conclusions reached are somewhat skewed. This is particularly so with the 'dying away' of the state, which is seen as either an expression of the core 'anarchist' position of Marxism itself (Kelsen 1949, 12; Tucker 1967); or somewhat of a fig leaf for 'authoritarianism' (Bloom 1946; Adamiak 1970); or as a dismantling of the structures of governance very soon after a proletarian revolution (Medalie 1959; Hunt 1984, 231–46). At times, the selection emphasises one feature at the expense of others—the most notable being a liking for the Paris commune and a down-playing of the proletarian dictatorship, let alone socialist *Gewalt* (Miliband 1965, 1991, 151; Avineri 1968, 202–20; Johnstone 1971; Balibar 1977, 58; Jessop 1978; Hunt 1984; Draper 1986, 175–306; Paolucci 2007, 233–37; van Ree 2015, 77, 115; Ware 2019, 161–63). In other words, there is very little that engages with the important material Engels produced in the late 1870s and especially the 1880s and into the 1890s. There are one or two exceptions, although now somewhat dated: the first is the work of Hal Draper, especially those relevant to the current study (Draper 1970, 1977, 1986, 1990). While Draper has worked with much of the relevant material and while his work is helpful as a beginning point of research, like many others he focuses overwhelmingly on Marx and sidelines Engels. Further, his conclusions have a tendency to confirm his sectarian presuppositions and are not always so helpful. The second is Hunt (1984), whose exhaustive study does at least deal with some of the relevant texts by Engels, although not crucial ones such as 'The Mark' or 'The Role of Force in History'. Yet, Hunt's study is vitiated by an assumption found in much of the material mentioned above, namely, that subsequent historical experiences of socialism in power and the arduous task of constructing socialism somehow departed from what Engels and Marx had thought. This book should go at least part of the way to showing how erroneous such an assumption is.

1.4 Chapter Synopsis

Now for a synopsis of the content to come. Some of the content will be repeated in the abstracts for each chapter, but the value of this synopsis is that it provides a concise overview of the argument of the book. The next chapter deals initially with Engels's programmatic observations on hitherto existing states, which would set the subsequent agenda for Marxist studies of such states. Apart from noting the key features of this analysis, which involves the core idea of the state as a 'separated public power', the chapter focuses on Engels's shifts between seeing such states as

[1] In this work, I do not engage with Chinese language material, for that is the main focus of another work (Boer 2021).

[2] I leave aside those interested in nothing more than hitherto existing states, since I refer to them in this chapter, and focus on material the deals with what happens after a communist revolution.

semi-autonomous, as instruments of a particular class in power, or as shaped in their very nature by the class in question. Engels moves between these three overlapping approaches, depending on the point he seeks to make, but he tends in more detailed work to opt for the third: that the nature of the state is determined by the class in power. This position emerges particularly in a relatively ignored work, 'The Role of Force in History' (1887–1888). Here Engels offers an analysis of Bismarck in Germany that is a close companion to Marx's 'Eighteenth Brumaire' (1852), with the specific point that the bourgeoisie was able to shape the state in its image indirectly, even when it did not hold the reins of power. Even more important is the emergence of a core category, *Gewalt*. The word is difficult to translate: its semantic field includes the senses of force, power and violence, so I leave the word untranslated. This provides a rather new angle, not only on his proposal that hitherto existing states may be defined as a 'separated public *Gewalt*', but also that a 'public *Gewalt*' exists that is not separated, and that it is necessary for the workers' movement to exercise socialist *Gewalt*.

This point leads to the third chapter, concerning socialist *Gewalt* and the dictatorship of the proletariat. The key finding of this chapter is Engels's emphasis on proletarian *Gewalt*, in both the revolutionary process and in the early stages of the construction of socialism when power is gained through a revolution. The concrete manifestation of this socialist *Gewalt* is the dictatorship of the proletariat, which Engels (like Marx) defines carefully not as an individual dictatorship (as with Bakunin) or by a small band (Blanquist), but as a collective dictatorship by the majority, the workers. On this basis, Engels's important contribution was to go beyond Marx and identify the Paris commune with the proletarian dictatorship. The context was a struggle with the moderates of the increasingly large German Social-Democratic Party, who tried to dispense with the dictatorship of the proletariat in its program and work within bourgeois democracy. In light of later tendencies in European communism to downplay the proletarian dictatorship and idealise the Paris commune (for example, with 'Eurocommunism' and the tendency among some Western Marxists), Engels's explicit argument that the commune was the exercise of the proletarian dictatorship, even that it did not go far enough in exercising such a dictatorship, is a timely warning. The chapter concludes by analysing Engels's explicit usage of 'socialist *Gewalt*' itself, both before and after a revolution. Crucially, Engels points out that political power also has economic influence and potency (*Potenz*).

The fourth chapter focuses on the 'dying away' of the state, in contrast to its 'abolition' as promulgated by Bakunin and the Anarchists in the late 1860s and 1870s. Given the many misunderstandings that surround the idea of the 'dying away' of the state, this is the longest chapter in the book since it analyses in significant detail all of the relevant material. It begins by studying the wider context in the 1840s among German socialists, finding that while they spoke of the abolition (*Abschaffung*), annihilation (*Vernichtung*) and dialectical transformation (*Aufhebung*) of private property, money and inheritance, they rarely, if ever, spoke of doing so to the state as such. Instead, they envisioned alternative structures, either of a new state or of a new form of social organisation. This is true even of Proudhon, who deeply influenced these early German socialists. There is one notable exception: Max Stirner in his liberal

anarchist work, *The Ego and Its Own* (1845), urged that the state should be abolished and annihilated. Thus, only when Engels and Marx (and others like Moses Hess) engage with Stirner do they speak of the abolition of the state, finding Stirner's proposals wanting since they focus on an act of pure will.

It is only in 1850 that Engels (and Marx) speak directly of the 'abolition [*Abschaffung*]' of the state for the first time. Notably, this is a critical response to what had become a popular slogan in all manner of circles, including bourgeois ones where such an 'abolition' entailed a bourgeois order in which they would be left alone to pursue their private gain. Crucially, this piece—which borrows the language of the slogan—identifies Stirner as the source and introduces the need for a delay in such an abolition. This delay is an early result of the method hammered out in the years before and expressed clearly for the first time in the Communist Manifesto of 1848: the primary concern should be socio-economic matters. Thus, a communist revolution would have these as its main task, while any 'abolition' of the state would follow as an outcome of such activity. This would be the position, refined and sharpened, that both Engels and Marx would hold in the struggle with Bakunin, who first formulated a somewhat coherent Anarchist position in the late 1860s and particularly in 1870s.

For Bakunin, the state was the prime cause and foundation of all exploitation and oppression, whether political or economic. Thus, the first task of a revolutionary movement upon attaining power should be to abolish (*Abschaffung*) the state, as a willed and conscious act. Bakunin struggled to show why the state should have this foundational role, at times connecting its quasi-sacred status with the role of the Christian church. But for Engels and Marx, this approach simply did not make sense: in light of their approach, the state was a secondary phenomenon, arising from economic conditions and class struggle. Thus, a communist revolution would need to enact wide-sweeping changes to the forces and relations of production before aspects of the superstructure, such as the state, could be addressed. In this context, we find an increasing emphasis that one of the final results of the process of constructing socialism, after other tasks had been achieved and the counter-revolution had been defeated, would be not the 'abolition' of the state, but its falling away, disappearance, going to sleep—the terms all appear in works of this time. Finally and as a way to sum up this position, Engels coined in the third edition of *Anti-Dühring* of 1894 the famous slogan: 'the state is not abolished, it dies away'. The influence of this slogan is due to its appearance in the extracted material that appeared as 'Socialism: Utopian and Scientific', which was read and studied by all Communists of the second and third generations.

The fifth chapter begins by addressing a contradiction that has arisen in light of the previous two chapters: between socialist *Gewalt* and the dying away of the of the state. The initial narrative of the former passing to the latter, which is part of Engels's approach, addresses neither how authority and *Gewalt* would continue, nor the nature of governance in a communist society. Dealing with these questions is the focus of this chapter, although I undertake the task with an important caveat: Engels, and indeed Marx, never experienced the actual exercise of power after a communist revolution. They were fully aware of this reality, warning that such analysis can be

undertaken only scientifically, only from actual experience. As Engels points out on a number of occasions, he and Marx were not in the business of creating utopian systems for the organisation of future society.

The chapter has two main sections. The first part analyses a number of brief statements by Engels and Marx that may be collated as follows: public *Gewalt* loses its political character and becomes the administration of things and the conduct of the forces and relations of production, for the genuine good of society. The statements are notably brief, even formulaic, for the good reason that they had in their context no extensive data on the actual practice of socialist governance. There was, however, an abundance of information from another source: pre-state forms of social organisation that existed in many parts of the world. It was precisely to this source of information that Engels devoted considerable energy in the 1880s. Here he found complex and many-layered types of what he carefully called 'social organisation', which was not separated from but stood 'in the midst of society'. They were not separated from society, not manifestations and means of class struggle, and thus did not constitute a state. Here, I seek to develop a terminology based on Engels, which speaks of the 'enmeshed governance' of 'baseline communism', with its attendant and indeed first form of human democracy. This is all very well, based as it was on the available historical and anthropological material of the time, but what relevance does it have for the enmeshed governance of socialism, let alone communism? To answer this question, I focus on the remarkable work from 1882, 'The Mark'. Here Engels outlines his research into this feature of German social life, from its earliest days to the present. The point—directed explicitly at peasant farmers—is that the communism of the future would entail a dialectical transformation (*Aufhebung*) of this baseline communism. Far from a hankering for the rural socialism of the European Middle Ages, or for an idealised 'primitive communism', or even for a secularised version of the religious return to Paradise, this dialectical transformation would both negate this baseline communism and transform its core features into a qualitatively different reality. Given that such a form of governance would stand in the midst of society, it cannot be called a 'state'; indeed, we reach the limits of the language derived from the Western European tradition, for with this type of enmeshed governance it becomes increasingly difficult to speak of the separation of state and society.

The concluding chapter to the book summarises Engels's basic principles concerning the nature of socialist governance: (1) Public power (*Gewalt*) continues but loses its 'political character'; (2) Governance entails the administration of things and the management of the processes of production for the sake of the true interests of society; (3) The many organs of governance would not be separated from society but stand in the midst of society; (4) This reality may be seen as a dialectical transformation, an *Aufhebung* of baseline communism. I ask whether these principles are being realised, even partially, in socialist countries today. I also examine what such a governance may be called, since 'state'—understood as a separated public power—is not appropriate in Engels's term. And I ask how we may understand the question of continuity and discontinuity. On this matter it is important to strike a realistic balance: to suggest that Engels and indeed Marx foresaw, or perhaps should have

foreseen, all of the developments in later efforts to construct socialism is simply unrealistic; to propose that later historical realities departed significantly from the original thoughts of the founders is even more extreme and not sustained by the evidence. Far better is a balanced approach. Thus, there is clearly significant continuity, much more than one might expect, between the initial philosophical foundations and the historical realities of socialist governance. At the same time, in the actual construction of socialism, from the Soviet Union to China, one would expect to face new problems for which new solutions were and are needed—albeit based on the initial principles and the method through which they were derived. As Engels put it in 1890, 'So-called "socialist society" is not, in my view, to be regarded as something that remains crystallised for all time, but rather being in process of constant change and transformation like all other social conditions'.

1.5 Approach to Citations

Finally, a word on the approach to citations. In all possible cases the primary citation is to the original language text by Engels (and Marx where relevant). These are in German, French and Italian, mostly available in the standard collections (*Gesamtausgabe* and *Werke*), but at times they are not, since neither collection is complete. Where necessary, I have found the original language source outside such collections. In most cases, I provide my own translation to highlight particular features of the text, or at least a modification of the standard English translation found in the *Collected Works*. At the same time and for ease of reference for readers, I provide a reference to the English version, even if the translation offered does not conform to this version.

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Chapter 2
The State as a Separated Public Power

Abstract This chapter concerns Engels's programmatic observations on hitherto existing forms of the state as a 'separated public power'. I dwell on Engels's shifts between seeing such states as semi-autonomous, as instruments of a particular class in power, or as shaped by that class. Engels often moves between these three overlapping approaches, but in more detailed work he opts for the third: the class in power determines the nature of the state. This is the clear position of a relatively ignored work, 'The Role of Force in History' (1887–1888). Focusing on Bismarck, Engels argues that the German bourgeoisie was able to shape the state in its image indirectly, even when it did not hold power. Even more important is the emergence of a core category, *Gewalt*. The word is difficult to translate: its semantic field includes the senses of force, power and violence, so I leave the word untranslated. This provides a rather new angle, not only on his proposal that hitherto existing states may be defined as a 'separated public *Gewalt*', but also that a 'public *Gewalt*' exists that is not separated, and that it is necessary for the workers' movement to exercise socialist *Gewalt*.

Keywords Forms of the state · Nature of the state · Bismarck · Indirect rule of bourgeoisie · Definition of *Gewalt*

2.1 Opening Remarks

> A perfect society, a perfect 'State [*Staat*]', are things which can only exist in the imagination [*Phantasie*]. On the contrary, all successive historical states [*Zustände*] are only transitory stages in the endless course of development of human society (Engels 1886c, 126; 1886d, 359).

Friedrich Engels provides abundant resources for considering the nature of socialist governance, especially in terms of what may be called 'enmeshed governance' that stands in the midst of society. This is not so much the Engels of the 'separated public power' of the state, but rather the Engels of the commune *and* the proletarian dictatorship, of the state's 'dying away' *and* the importance of socialist *Gewalt*.

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In other words, the significant contribution of Engels lies in his proposal for the dialectical transformation of 'baseline communism' into a whole new form of governance that is not separated from but stands in the midst of society. This enmeshed governance entails even more complex patterns of administration, economic oversight, elections, councils, leaders, office holders, as well as sovereignty and *Gewalt* (which I leave untranslated due to the range of its semantic field).

In order to get to this point, I need initially to work through Engels's material on the state as a separated power. This is the most well-known of his writings on the state, but a revisit is necessary since even here unexpected and unexamined features emerge. In what follows, I begin with his rather comprehensive theory of the hitherto existing forms of the state, which emerge from socio-economic conditions and class struggle as a separated public *Gewalt*. At the same time, there is some ambivalence in his presentation: is the state an instrument in class struggle, an autonomous feature of the superstructure, or is its nature determined and infused by the dominant class? While he emphases one or another of these positions, his more sustained analysis tends towards the position that the state's nature is shaped by the class that holds sway. Significantly and with particular reference to the bourgeoisie, Engels argues that the dominant class does not necessarily need to hold the reins of power, as long as wider economic and social structures are shaped in its image. This position emerges most clearly in the relatively ignored piece, 'The Role of Force in History', which offers an analysis of Bismarck in Germany. This is also where we begin to see the significance of the category of *Gewalt*, which I analyse in some detail since it will become important in the next chapter concerning the dictatorship of the proletariat as one and the same with the (Paris) commune.

2.2 Hitherto Existing States

Since Engels reflections on actually existing states are the most well-known and influential, they can best be summarised as a series of theses. In the analysis that follows the theses, I identify the ambivalences in Engels's apparent clarity, but also focus on the key points that are relevant for what might happen to the state after a communist revolution.[1]

1. Engels repeatedly asserts that the state is a 'public power [*öffentliche Gewalt*]' that is 'separated [*getrennte*]' from society (Engels 1892a, 204, 211, 214, 222, 264; 1892b, 201, 210, 213, 221, 269–270).[2] This definition is based on the methodological assumption that political ideas and practices '*in letzter Instanz*'

[1] The best summary may be found in *The Origin of the Family* (Engels 1892a, 262–266; 1892b, 268–272), from which the quotations in the following theses are drawn. References to *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* are taken from the fourth German edition of 1892, since it contains much additional material compared with the first edition of 1884.

[2] Engels already used *öffentliche Gewalt* more than a decade earlier, in 'Zur Wohnungsfrage' (Engels 1872–1873a, 71).

(Engels and Kautsky 1887a, 399) derive from economic conditions.[3] It determines all of his observations concerning the nature and history of the state, from the ancient Athenians to his own day.

2. Thus, the state may either be imposed from without or it arises from within a society riven with 'irreconcilable opposites', which are 'classes with conflicting economic interests'.[4]
3. So that society does not tear itself to pieces, a *Gewalt* is necessary to 'alleviate the conflict and keep it within the bounds of "order"'.
4. This *Gewalt* 'alienates itself more and more' from society, so that it becomes 'separated', 'alienated' and 'above' society.
5. While the initial manifestation of this *Gewalt* may be in terms of an armed force that is no longer coterminous with the people (as a militia), it is also comprised of 'material adjuncts, prisons and institutions of coercion of all kinds'. In short, these are instruments of repression.
6. Alongside such institutions are what Engels calls 'organs of society [*Organe der Gesellschaft*]'. These are not part of society, standing in its midst, but are 'above' and 'alien [*entfremdenden*]' and need to be asserted through a system of laws and sustained through taxes.[5]
7. Is the state an instrument of the ruling class, a structure determined by this class, or it is somewhat autonomous? The question arises from three different emphases in Engels's text, emphases that set the boundaries of subsequent Marxist debate:

    a. 'As a rule', Engels writes, the state provides the means whereby the economically dominant class also becomes the politically dominant class. Engels speaks of the state being a 'means of keeping' down the oppressed, an 'instrument [*Werkzeug*]' for exploitation.
    b. At the same time, he speaks of the state as an 'organisation of the possessing class [*Organisation der besitzenden Klasse*]', so much so that we have the 'state of slave owners', the 'feudal state [*Feudalstaat*]' and the 'modern

[3] The economic determination of the state is emphasised in Engels's piece on Feuerbach (Engels 1886c, 158; 1886d, 391–393).

[4] Engels's texts evince a slight tension between the two possibilities—from without or from within. In *The Origin of the Family*, he writes that the state is 'by no means a power forced on society from without' (Engels 1892a, 263; 1892b, 269). By contrast, in 'The Frankish Period' with its focus on German history and the resilience of the Mark, he writes: 'the continued existence of the nation depended on a state power [*Staatsgewalt*] which did not derive from these communities but confronted them as something alien' (Engels 1882c, 353; 1882d, 59). The difference between the two texts may be explained in terms of Engels's desire to find a common path to the state in all contexts and his awareness of distinct histories and social formations. I will discuss the Mark fully in the fourth chapter.

[5] Engels adds that the state divides its subjects '*according to territory*', not tribe or gens, although he had earlier in *The Origin of the Family* noted that territory already characterises 'pre-state' tribal formations.

representative state [*Repräsentativstaat*]' or the 'state of the capitalists',[6] implying that specific states are imbued with and even determined by a specific nature.[7]

c. A state may gain relative autonomy, under two conditions. First, it may be due to a relative balance in class conflict, with neither class dominating. In this situation, the state acquires temporarily a 'certain degree of independence of both' classes. Second, when he deals with the state's role in economic matters, he stresses its 'relative autonomy [*relativen Selbständigkeit*]', which develops its own trend as it seeks to assert its agenda on the economy, an agenda that may favour or hinder economic development (Engels 1890a, 490; 1890b, 59–60). In both cases, the immediate reference is Bismarck's Germany.

Since my overall concern is with the state after a revolution and during the construction of socialism, I emphasise the following in relation to actually existing states. The crucial distinction is between separation and integration or enmeshment. This distinction appears a few times in the points above, especially when Engels contrasts the nature of the military and the 'organs of society', which are different from the 'organs of the gentile constitution [*Organe der Gentilverfassung*]' that stand 'in the midst of society [*eben mitten in der Gesellschaft*]' (Engels 1892a, 265; 1892b, 270). Indeed, the definition of the state relies on this contrast, which runs through *The Origin of the Family*. Engels casts it primarily as a historical narrative, in which the unseparated or integrated nature of pre-state formations contrasts, but also provides the conditions for, the separated nature of the state that follows. While this is a rather standard narrative of differentiation,[8] moving from an undifferentiated state to one that is clearly differentiated (thus the Athenian state provides the pure form of this narrative[9]), it opens a theoretical possibility that is ultimately not reliant

[6] The final quotation comes from *Anti-Dühring*, where Engels adds by way of clarification, 'the ideal personification of the total national capital [*der ideelle Gesamtkapitalist*]' (Engels 1878, 443).

[7] This tendency is expressed well in his comment in the introduction to Borkheim's pamphlet concerning the 1848 revolutions: 'the state is becoming more and more estranged from the masses of the people and is now well on the way to transforming itself into a consortium of landowners, stockbrokers and big industrialists for the exploitation of the people' (Engels 1887c, 53; 1887d, 450).

[8] The most sustained example of such a narrative of differentiation appears in the final section of *The Origin of the Family*, but this section also summarises the whole treatment of the state in this work (Engels 1892a, 253–271; 1892b, 256–276; see also Engels 1882c, 353–354; 1882d, 60; 1878, 368–372; 1894b, 166–169).

[9] With the rise of the Athenian state Engels finds various commercial, money and property relations that develop class relations and thereby the state, with the constitutions articulating the new conditions (Engels 1892a, 214–223; 1892b, 213–222). While he is guilty of a classicist narrative in such a position, finding the Roman and especially the German situations less 'pure' (the latter taking full state forms only with Charlemagne and the rise of feudalism [Engels 1892a, 249–251; 1892b, 252–254]), my focus is on the theoretical potential of Engels's texts in relation to socialist governance. For this reason, it is beyond my remit to delve into Engels's fascinating studies of the rise of the feudal state, both in his study on the Frankish period and Charlemagne and in his draft concerning the decline of feudalism (Engels 1882c, 1882d, 1884a, 1884b).

on the narrative: communism entails a de-differentiation, if I may put it that way. Or in terms of the distinction between separation and integration, communism is clearly closer to the integrated and enmeshed condition. The implications for understanding what happens to the state under socialism and indeed communism (to borrow Lenin's distinction) are profound.

2.3 Instrument, Nature or Autonomy?

At the same time, the distinction produces some tensions in Engels's presentation.[10] He seeks to be sensitive to historical variations, which appear most obviously in the question I posed in place of thesis 7. Let me begin with the third answer to the question, concerning the relative autonomy of the state. In some respects, this would seem to be the most logical outcome of his initial proposal that the state arises from irreconcilable class conflict and that a *Gewalt* is needed to ameliorate the conflict and keep it within bounds (so that the system is not torn apart).[11] As we will see in the next chapter, this emphasis becomes more important when Engels argues that the state itself is an economic power, with an eye on what may happen after a communist revolution.

The first and second answers to the question are more intriguing. Is the separated state a relatively neutral 'instrument [*Werkzeug*]' in the hands of the dominant class? Engels tends in this direction with his comment, 'as a rule [*in der Regel*]'.[12] Yet this position can slip into another: the ruling class may determine the nature of the state in question, shaping it into a particular form. One can see how the connection may

[10] Hunt (1984, 21–24) sees a neat resolution of these tensions in the letter to Conrad Schmidt in October of 1890, but the solution is not so simple.

[11] Many subsequent Marxist analyses of the bourgeois state follow this line, offering a range of variations (Carnoy 1984, 50; Esping-Andersen et al. 1976). For example, since the bourgeois state arose from the contradictory logic of capitalist accumulation, it performs the long-term enabling tasks (law, police and military, infrastructure, education and so on) that capital cannot perform itself (Holloway and Picciotto 1978). Or the state's autonomy is 'embedded' through the specific connections between the state and elite interests (Evans 1995). Or, this form of the state is an internally contradictory apparatus that is both constrained, in light of capitalist demands, in acting in the best interests of the population (the contradiction between capitalist accumulation and democratic legitimation). While it attempts to solve problems arising from capitalist relations (inequality, exploitation, social breakdown), it cannot deal with the core capitalist features that generate such problems (Offe 1974, 1984). Perhaps the most extreme proposal is that the bourgeois state is an autonomous organisational actor, having developed independently from capital and class and seeks to enhance its own interests and power, at times at the expense of dominant capitalists (Skocpol 1979; Evans et al. 1985; Block 1980; Mann 1986–2013). Notably, all these efforts deal specifically with what Engels calls the 'modern representative state', which is none other than the liberal European nation-state, or—using more concise terminology—the bourgeois state.

[12] A number of later Marxist analyses of the bourgeois state agree, suggesting that the concentration of capital in relatively few hands enables the ruling class to have material and ideological control over the levers of power (Sweezy 1942; Miliband 1969; Baran and Sweezy 1966; Domhoff 1979; Berberoglu 2005).

be made, for an instrument may take on a distinct shape, having been constructed by its wielder. Yet an instrument and a distinct form are not necessarily the same: the former is more neutral—an instrument, means or tool—and the latter indicates a particular nature, determined by the ruling class in question.[13]

Engels's text struggles with this distinction, at times seemingly connecting instrument and nature,[14] while at others suggesting that they are distinct. A notable example is the fascinating paragraph towards the close of *The Origin of the Family*,[15] where Engels explores the historical variations of distinct types of states. Here he writes of an 'organisation of the possessing class [*Organisation der besitzenden Klasse*]' for the sake of protection against the non-possessing class.[16] An organisation is already more than a mere instrument, suggesting structures, shaping and the nature of the state itself. It may take the form of property or wealth qualifications for the right to participate in the state (from Athens and Rome to the early parliamentary systems of his own day), or direct corruption of government officials, or an alliance between the government and the stock exchange for the sake of building infrastructure. Tellingly, at each suggestion Engels notes that such mechanisms are not necessary for the ruling class to determine the state: neither property qualifications, nor corruption, nor alliances between government and stock exchange are needed. Why not? A crucial sentence indicates the direction of his thought, especially in light of the bourgeois state and its emerging practice of apparent universal suffrage. In this situation, how does wealth control the state? It 'exercises its power indirectly, but all the more surely [*seine Machtindirekt, aber um so sichrer aus*]'. One may object that he writes only a few sentences later that the possessing class rules 'directly by means of [*direkt mittelst*]' universal suffrage. The initial impression is that he seems to slide back to an instrumental position. But he does not simply write *direct*, adding immediately afterwards *mittelst*, which indicates an intermediary, a 'medium' (as the MECW translation has it), through which direct rule must operate.

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[13] I would also locate Lenin's proposals in the tension between instrument and determined nature (Lenin 1917a, 7–9; 1917b, 392–394).

[14] So also Engels's comment in *Anti-Dühring*, where he speaks of state-ownership (the example given in a footnote is to Bismarck's nationalisation of the railways). He writes that the state is 'the organisation that bourgeois society takes on in order to support the general external conditions of the capitalist mode of production against the encroachments as well of the workers as of individual capitalists. The modern state, no matter what its form, is essentially a capitalist machine [*kapitalistische Maschine*], the state of the capitalists, the ideal personification of the total national capital' (Engels 1878, 443; 1894b, 266).

[15] The quotations that follow are drawn from this paragraph (Engels 1892a, 265–266; 1892b, 271–272).

[16] In *Anti-Dühring* Engels sides more strongly with this position: the state is 'an organisation of the particular class which was at the same time the exploiting class' (Engels 1878, 444, 535; 1894b, 267). And in 'The Housing Question' of more than a decade earlier, he writes: 'The state is nothing but the organised collective power [*organisirte Gesammtmacht*] of the possessing classes, the landowners and the capitalists, as against the exploited classes, the peasants and the workers' (Engels 1872–1873a, 51; 1872–1873b, 362). He makes a comparable point in 'The Frankish Period', where an externally imposed state becomes despotism, while one that arises on the basis of the big landowners entails political rule by an aristocracy (Engels 1882c, 353–354; 1882d, 60).

2.4 Indirect Rule: The Example of Bismarck's Germany

Let me press more heavily on the term 'indirect'. To begin with, in a piece written with Kautsky called 'Lawyers' Socialism', Engels observes that in the European transition from feudalism to capitalism, the Church was replaced by the State as the arbiter of all matters economic and social—or at least this was how people saw the situation. Crucially, it was the rise of a 'legal world view' that signalled such a shift. While we may quibble that the Church had developed its own complex legal system since the 'lawyer popes' of the eleventh century, the point I seek to draw out is that the bourgeoisie sought a legal system controlled not by the Church but by the state. The bourgeoisie's battle cry was equality before the law, making more and more legal demands so that a new form of the state arose, the 'classical one of the bourgeoisie' (Engels and Kautsky 1887a, 398; 1887b, 598). The clear implication is that this form developed without direct power held by the bourgeoisie, but rather as a process of transformation from without.

Further, for Engels Bismarck (see above) provides an excellent example of the indirect rule of the bourgeoisie. Only a few years later, he would come to devote more attention to Bismarck in the extremely insightful (albeit largely ignored) work, 'The Role of Force in History'.[17] This text is worthy of detailed study in its own right, not least because it complements the sophisticated analysis of Marx's 'Eighteenth Brumaire'. While Marx deals with Louis Napoleon (III), Engels focuses on Bismarck's rise to power and Germany's dialectical leap into becoming a significant European power.[18] Crucially, Engels argues that no matter how much Bismarck—like Louis Napoleon—may have sidelined the bourgeoisie from the reins of power, he enabled the very structures of a bourgeois state in political and economic terms. Since the bourgeoisie, especially since the 1848 revolutions, had expanded as never before the network of industry and international trade, it needed not the many individual states but a unified German state, with uniform laws and regulations and currency, to

[17] 'The Role of Force in History' was written in draft in 1887–1888 and was initially planned as the fourth and final chapter to a work with the same name (Engels 1887–1888c, 1887–1888d, 1887–1888e, 1887–1888f, 1887–1888g; see also Engels 1886a, 574–575; 1886b, 529; 1887a, 730; 1887b, 126; 1888a, 15; 1888b, 142; 1888c, 1888d, 1888e, 1888f, 1888g, 1888h, 1888i, 1888j). The preceding part was to include three chapters from *Anti-Dühring* on the theory of force (Engels 1878, 350–373; 1894b, 146–171). As with a number of works in the 1880s dealing with the state and German history, 'The Role of Force in History' remained unfinished, with the draft chapter published in a heavily edited form (by Eduard Bernstein) as 'Gewalt und Ökonomie bei der Herstellung der neuen Deutschen Reichs', in *Die Neue Zeit*, vol. 1, nrs. 22–26 (1895–1896): 722–776. Only later were some missing pages of the original manuscript found, with the MEGA version of 2002 being the first based on the extant manuscript. As for the planned four-chapter work, this was finally published in German as *Über der Gewaltstheorie: Gewalt und Ökonomie bei der Herstellung der neuen Deutschen Reichs* (Engels 1946), with a belated English translation appearing more than two decades later (Engels 1968). Curiously, Morfino (2009, 91–94) ignores this text, focusing only on the three chapters from *Anti-Dühring*.

[18] Instead of simply 'catching up,' Germany enacted a dialectical leap through its very backwardness. For distinct emphasis on this chronic backwardness, see the notes gathered as 'Varia on Germany' (Engels 1873–1874a, 1873–1874b).

facilitate the process even further—including the easy mobility of labour.[19] Bismarck obliged, enacting law after law that met bourgeois demands while ensuring that actual state power remained out of their hands. To this the bourgeoisie consented, since they could see that Bismarck was not only shaping the new German state in their image, but that he was also ensuring they did not yet have to face their real enemy, the working class (Engels 1874e, 381; 1874f, 628).[20] As Engels puts it, the 'bourgeoisie triumphed without having to put up a serious fight' (Engels 1887–1888a, 80; 1887–1888b, 472).[21]

2.5 The Role of *Gewalt*

While this argument reinforces Marx's comparable conclusion in 'The Eighteenth Brumaire', with the significant implication that the nature of a particular state is shaped and even determined by the dominant class even when it does not have direct political power, Engels also develops much further a unique insight. It concerns *Gewalt*, a term I have left untranslated.[22] I have also delayed treatment of the term until this point, since it will become important for his potential contribution to understanding developments in socialist governance. What do Engels's texts indicate concerning the meaning of *Gewalt*?[23] In the opening sentence of 'The Role of Force

[19] We may identify here the seeds of Wallerstein's (1974) later argument that capitalism needed strong states with unified economic and legal frameworks to ensure the passage of goods across borders.

[20] I emphasise the indirect rule of the bourgeoisie, since this approach is crucial for Engels's analysis and meshes with that of Marx. However, Engels elsewhere explores some additional features. For example, the rise of the bourgeoisie was closely connected with the rise of absolute monarchies (Engels 1884a, 1884b; Boer 2019), so much so that the bourgeoisie was reluctant to embrace republican state forms. While the republic is the ultimate form of the rule of the bourgeoisie, the latter's reluctance came not from nostalgia but because in a republic it had to come face to face with the working class (Engels 1873e, 1873f). Further, Engels also outlines the bourgeoisification of the older classes under the new conditions in Germany, since the economic conditions were increasingly determined by bourgeois norms (Engels 1872–1873a, 52–54; 1872–1873b, 362–364).

[21] Or more dialectically, Engels later speaks of carrying out 'the will of the bourgeoisie against its will' (Engels 1887–1888a, 87; 1887–1888b, 480). This point is completely missed by Retallack (2011). A rough earlier version of this argument appears in 'The "Crisis" in Prussia' (Engels 1873a, 1873b). Perhaps the closest that subsequent Marxist analyses come to this approach to the bourgeois state is the proposal that such a state is a structure—divided between apparatus and power—that is shaped to provide a relatively stable environment for capital, which it does so by ameliorating and regulating class struggle, as well as the inherent crises of capitalist economics and its uneven development (Mandel 1975; Poulantzas 1978, 1980; Therborn 1978; Wright 1978; Jessop 1982; Przeworski 1985).

[22] For a background in Hegel, see Morfino (2009, 82–91). Unfortunately, Morfino reduces the term to 'violence', ignoring its semantic field.

[23] I have deliberately put the question in this form, since I prefer to leave aside the vexed and well-nigh impossible task of determining what an author intended at a particular moment. Instead, it is better to examine how Engels's texts elaborate on the term.

[*Gewalt*]', Engels identifies his topic as the analysis of contemporary German history and its '*Gewaltspraxis von Blut und Eisen*' (Engels 1887–1888a, 66).[24] The practice of *Gewalt* entails 'blood and iron'. It may be very well to speak in abstract terms of 'power', 'force' and 'authority' (the tendency of translators when encountering *Gewalt*), but the reality here is clearly in the direction of the violence of weapons and blood spilled in conflict.[25]

But perhaps 'blood and iron' is a one-off emphasis, due to the subject matter of the text—the belated unification of Germany under Bismarck and its underlying economic realities.[26] Not at all. In order to show how Engels uses the term beyond 'The Role of Force', I have undertaken an analysis of his texts from the 1870s and 1880s.[27] The usages include *Gewalt* itself, the important adverbial form *gewaltsam* (and *mit Gewalt*), the adjectival *Gewalttätig*, and the expected German link-words such as *Gewaltmaßnahmen* and *Gewalttätigkeiten.* The overwhelming weight of usage falls on the hard edge of the term. For example, a regime—as a 'special repressive force [*besondre Repressionsgewalt*]'—keeps its subjects in check 'violently' and 'with terror' (both are senses of *gewaltsam*),[28] often by means of 'armed [*bewaffneten*]' 'police power [*Polizeigewalt*]'. It expels others 'with violent force [*mit Gewalt*]' and deals with opposition forces, like the International, with

[24] Or, as Engels puts it in *Anti-Dühring*, '*Gewalt*, nowadays, is the army and navy' (Engels 1878, 358; 1894b, 154).

[25] Engels's background also plays a role in this emphasis. Already since 1842, military matters had been in Engels's thoughts and occasionally actions. In that year, he enlisted in the 12th Foot Company of the Guards Artillery Brigade in Berlin, to be followed by military action during the 1848 revolutions (at first in Elberfeld and Barmen and a little later with the militia in the Palatinate and Baden). These experiences, with their insights and disappointments, led him to deeply insightful articles as a military correspondent and then analyst of the history and present realities of all aspects of military forces, such as training, equipment, discipline, morale, fortifications, tactics, and the first real argument for the need for a good and decisive military force for any revolutionary movement. This material is rarely appreciated, even though it forms a substantial amount of Engels's published work. The items are too many to cite here, but an interested reader may consult frequent items on military matters from *MEGA* I.11, *MEW* 11 and *MECW* 11 onwards (from the 1848 revolutions to the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–1871), as well as analyses of military forces in *MEGA* I.16–I.18, *MEW* 14–15 and *MECW* 18–19. It should be no surprise that, in his schematic depiction of the rise of the state as a 'separated public power', a military force distinct from the people should be the first sign of this development, or indeed in his reply to Dühring that he should dig into his knowledge of military matters (Engels 1878, 357–364; 1894b, 155–161).

[26] In his polemic against Dühring, Engels stresses the importance of economic might (*Macht*) as a determining feature of political *Gewalt*. In this case, he sets out to undermine Dühring's hypothesis that political *Gewalt* is primary and economic realities secondary (Engels 1878, 350–373; 1894b, 146–171). 'The Role of Force in History' may therefore be seen as Engels's answer at a more comprehensive level: this is what *Gewalt* really entails (and not some mythical tale of Robinson Crusoe and Friday, beloved by Dühring).

[27] The sample from the 1870s and 1880s is enough to make my point. One may find similar usages before the 1870s and in the 1890s.

[28] The sense of terror—*gewaltsamen*, translating from the original French *terroristes* (Marx and Engels 1873a, 234; 1874, 538)—emerges when Marx and Engels speak of Bakunin and another Russian anarchist, Nechayev.

'violent measures [*Gewaltmaßnahmen*]'[29]—even though 'there is no force in the world [*auf der Erde keine Gewalt*] strong enough to suppress the ever-growing revolutionary movement of the modern proletariat'.[30] All of this is summed up with the term 'brutal force [*brutale Gewalt*]' (Engels 1887–1888a, 101; 1887–1888b, 495).[31] With an eye on my later treatment of revolutionary *Gewalt*, let me note here that Engels—and indeed Marx—also uses the term in relation to the workers' movement. A good example is the comment made in the preface to the 1872 reprint of the Communist Manifesto, where they reflect on the implications of the Paris Commune: the proletariat 'for the first time held political power [*politische Gewalt*]' for two months, revealing that 'the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made State machinery, and wield it for its own purposes' (Marx and Engels 1872a, 96; 1872b, 175).[32]

To return to 'The Role of Force': military machinations constitute the line of blood that draws the many parts together,[33] defining the sense of *Gewalt*. In this light, Engels points out that German political and economic unity had to be 'won in struggle [*erkämpft werden*]' against both external and internal enemies (Engels 1887–1888a, 70; 1887–1888b, 460). Externally, it required continual wars, realignments of alliances, temporary settlements and new wars.[34] The turning point—for Engels's

[29] Or indeed the anarchists under Bakunin, who against The International use *le guet-á-pens* (ambush) (Marx and Engels 1873a, 170), which appears in the official German translation as '*Gewalttat aus feigem Hinterhalt*' (Marx and Engels 1874, 478). *MECW* renders it with 'the stab in the back' (Marx and Engels 1873b, 458).

[30] Since the references to such usages are extensive, I place them here, citing only texts published originally in German; Engels (1872e, 64; 1872f, 138; 1872c, 178; 1872d, 284; 1872–1873a, 20, 51, 52, 62; 1872–1873b, 329, 361, 363, 371; 1873c, 327, 328; 1873d, 585, 586; 1873–1874a, 341; 1873–1874b, 600; 1874c, 355; 1874d, 616; 1874a, 361; 1874b, 621; 1874e, 383; 1874f, 631; 1877a, 104–105; 1877b, 188; 1878, 234, 427, 442; 1894b, 24, 245, 263–264; 1887–1888a, 82, 84–85, 87–88, 94, 101, 114; 1887–1888b, 475–477, 480, 487, 495, 507; 1882a, 636; 1882b, 450; 1882e, 328; 1882f, 29; 1882c, 353–355, 366–369, 373, 386; 1882d, 59–63, 74–77, 81, 95); Marx and Engels (1879a, 179; 1879b, 265). Although 'Socialism: Utopian and Scientific' originally appeared in French (Engels 1880c), an official German translation appeared in 1891, where the word is used frequently (Engels 1891, 592, 603, 616–617, 619–620). Marx's usage of the *gewalt* root has a very similar tone (Marx 1872a, 69; 1872b, 143; 1872c, 86; 1872d, 161; 1872e, 133; 1872f, 223; 1872g, 160; 1872h, 255; 1875a, 396; 1875b, 52). Occasionally, we find other dimensions of the semantic field invoked, such as 'executive power [*Exekutivgewalt*]' (Engels 1887–1888a, 106; 1887–1888b, 499), or indeed the sense of weighty, serious or enormous, for which *gewaltig* is used. For example, we find a 'grave mistake [*gewaltig irren*]' or 'enormous progress [*gewaltigen Fortschritt*]' (Engels 1872a, 74; 1872b, 148; 1872–1873a, 50, 55; 1872–1873b, 360, 366; 1873a, 116, 117; 1873b, 403, 404).

[31] Although Engels's predominant concern is political, he also refers to nature, which works 'blindly, violently [*gewaltsam*], destructively [*zerstörend*]' (Engels 1894a, 534). The analogy drawn is with productive forces under a capitalist market economy, although the sense of an elemental spontaneous force, outside human control, would be taken up by Lenin and Stalin (*Stikhiinyi* and *stikhiinost'*) in relation to a communist revolution (Boer 2013, 141–143).

[32] The original comment appeared in the third draft of 'The Civil War in France' (Marx 1871, 137).

[33] In his draft treatment of the decline of feudalism, Engels traces—among other elements—the changes in military technology and strategy (Engels 1884a, 51–52; 1884b, 562–564).

[34] Albeit not determinative, as Tilly's (1985, 1990) selective approach would have it.

analysis—is when reunification takes the path of Prussian hegemony (in contrast to the two other possibilities of genuine abolition of differences between all the German states and Austrian hegemony). This process was kick-started by humiliation at the hand of Denmark in the mid-nineteenth century, which spurred Bismarck to undertake a wholesale reconfiguration of the armed forces, leading to the decisive victory over Denmark in a little over a decade. From there, the path led eventually to the conquest of France, at which point the new German empire became the 'first power [*erste Macht*]' in Europe, with all power (*Macht*) concentrated in the dictator Bismarck's hands (Engels 1887–1888a, 104; 1887–1888b, 498).[35] Internally, the first hint is provided by Engels's use of 'dictator' to designate Bismarck. In a crucial paragraph, he speaks of the tensions and collaboration between the bourgeoisie and Bismarck. The former demanded a revolutionary transformation of Germany, but this could be achieved 'only by force [*nur durch die Gewalt*]', which he immediately defines as 'only by an actual dictatorship [*nur durch eine tatsächliche Diktatur*]'. Two types of *Gewalt* exist in the modern state, namely the 'elemental power of the popular masses [*elementare Gewalt der Volksmassen*]' and 'organised state power [*die organisierte Staatsgewalt*]'. The latter is found in none other than the army. While the German bourgeoisie had grown deeply suspicious of the force of the masses, it also did not have the army at its disposal. 'But', Engels points out, 'Bismarck had', so much so that he embodied *Staatsgewalt* (Engels 1887–1888a, 87; 1887–1888b, 479; 1872–1873a, 53; 1872–1873b, 364).[36]

2.6 Conclusion

To sum up the analysis thus far: on the one hand, much of Engels's material on the state as a 'separated public power' is reasonably well-known. Indeed, this material has become what many would regard as the foundation of a conventional Marxist theory of the state. Not only did Engels set in place the framework for subsequent Marxist analyses, but also the tensions with which they continue to struggle (see the discussion in the footnotes of this chapter).[37] That he also influenced Weber is

[35] At this point Engels uses *Macht* when speaking of power and strength. Although not quite as frequent as *Gewalt* in the texts under consideration, we may note the following: when the emphasis falls on power per se, Engels prefers to use *Macht*; when the more forceful and indeed violent sense is to the forefront, he tends to use *Gewalt* and its associated terms. For detailed accounts of the defeat of the French and conquest of Paris in 1870–1871, with Engels's insightful and enthralling war correspondence, see his 'Notes on the war' (Engels 1870–1871).

[36] Bismarck's influence on Germany's dialectical leap would draw Engels's attention again and again, as he sought to show how economic concerns influenced Bismarck's moves. These include the supposed 'socialism' of Bismarck's nationalisation of railways and industry, the introduction of social insurance, and so on—all of which have erroneously been claimed as the origins of the 'welfare state' (Engels 1894a, 533; 1894b, 265; 1880a, 1880b, 1881, 1890c, 1890d, 1890e).

[37] With one caveat: while Engels wrote of different forms of the state throughout European history, let alone pre-state forms, the vast bulk of subsequent work has focused on the liberal European nation-state. This includes transitional forms such as the 'familial' state, the much-studied 'welfare'

quite clear, even if the latter's definition fails to acknowledge Engels: 'the form of human community [*Gemeinschaft*] that (successfully) lays claim to the *monopoly of legitimate physical violence* [*Gewaltsamkeit*] within a particular territory' (Weber 1919, 6; 2004, 33).[38]

My agenda has been different: I have focused on features of Engels's analysis that open up the question of what happens to the state during the construction of socialism. Thus, I have been drawn to his tendency to see each form of the state as determined by its specific social and class formations. Less an abstract 'state', usually with the definite article as 'the state', but real specific states shaped by historical, cultural and economic conditions. Part of this determination involves indirect rule (the bourgeoisie is Engels's signal example). Yet, the most important feature of the material thus far concerns his deployment of *Gewalt*, which invokes the semantic range of power, force and violence.[39] It may be all very well to speak of the violent measures of states hitherto experienced, or the force of Bismarck's unification of the German states and the belated rise of Germany as a preeminent European power. But is it also possible to speak of socialist *Gewalt*?

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state and—in an effort to apply European concepts further afield—the loosely defined 'developmental' state (Esping-Andersen 1990; Barrow 1993; Evans 1995, 47–59, 229–234; Woo-Cumings 1999). Efforts at transcending these tensions usually end up replicating them (Jessop 1982, 1990; Held and Krieger 1984; Alford and Friedland 1985).

[38] Thus, efforts to belittle Engels's contribution are curious indeed (Carnoy 1984, 45–61; Held 1989, 37–38).

[39] It remains a puzzle as to why critics have not realised the importance of *Gewalt*. For example, Draper's (1970, 1986) old but still useful studies make virtually no mention of the term.

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Chapter 3
Socialist *Gewalt* and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat

Abstract This chapter deals with proletarian *Gewalt*, which Engels sees as necessary in both the revolutionary process and in the early stages of socialist construction. The concrete manifestation of this socialist *Gewalt* is the dictatorship of the proletariat, which Engels (like Marx) defines carefully not as an individual dictatorship (as with Bakunin) or by a small band (Blanquist), but as a collective dictatorship by the majority, the workers. Engels's important contribution was to go beyond Marx and identify the Paris Commune with the proletarian dictatorship. The context was a struggle with the moderates of the large German Social-Democratic Party, who tried to dispense with the dictatorship of the proletariat and work within bourgeois democracy. In light of later tendencies in European communism to downplay the proletarian dictatorship and idealise the Paris Commune ('Eurocommunism' and some Western Marxists), Engels's explicit argument that the commune was the exercise of the proletarian dictatorship, even that it did not go far enough in exercising such a dictatorship, is a timely warning. The chapter concludes by analysing Engels's explicit usage of 'socialist *Gewalt*' itself, both before and after a revolution, emphasising that political power also has economic influence and potency (*Potenz*).

Keywords Socialist *Gewalt* · Dictatorship of the proletariat · Paris commune · Struggle with moderates · Economic *Potenz*

3.1 Opening Remarks

The previous chapter left us with the question as to whether Engels also wrote of socialist *Gewalt*. He did so in two main respects: the dictatorship of the proletariat and *Gewalt* itself. The core question for Engels was what would happen to existing forms of the state after a proletarian revolution.[1] On this matter, Engels inherited a tension from Marx: between the commune and the dictatorship of the proletariat.

[1] That a communist revolution itself would entail violence is obvious to Engels. Generated objectively out of the contradictions of capitalism, between increasingly socialised production and capitalist appropriation, such a revolution would entail a 'violent explosion [*gewaltsamen Ausbruch*]' (Engels 1878, 442; 1891u, 616). See also his reference to the Bakuninists who had seized Alcoy

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Marx did not have the energy or longevity to be able to solve the tension. He may have acknowledged it and even attempted the beginnings of a narrative progression from dictatorship to commune, but he offered no real solution. By contrast, Engels did live longer and certainly had more energy later in life. The result: he realised ever more clearly that the proletarian dictatorship entailed the use of authority, power, force and even violence. In short, it was to be the exercise of socialist *Gewalt*. One had to deal decisively with the extremely powerful forces of reaction and counter-revolution. As Mao Zedong observed, a revolution is no dinner party.

At the same time, Engels moved beyond Marx on one crucial item: he increasingly asserted that the proletarian dictatorship and the commune are one and the same. He may have entertained for a time a narrative progression from one to the other, but his main point is their actual conflation. Political circumstances played a role, particularly in the German Social-Democratic Party. Its stunning growth and influence had led to recognition and elected representatives in the Reichstag, but this very circumstance also fostered a right-wing that became decidedly nervous about any talk of a proletarian dictatorship. An idealised commune was fine, but the proletarian dictatorship had to be excised from its program. Engels responded in the early 1890s by arguing ever more strongly for the importance of the proletarian dictatorship, which was no longer separate from the commune but part of its very structure and actions. Political developments were not the only factor, for theoretical clarification was also important. As Engels returned to study, edit and write introductions to a number of Marx's key texts—*The Civil War in France* and *The Class Struggles in France, 1848–1850* (edited for the first time in book form) and 'Critique of the Gotha Programme'—he came to understand that the commune was not an idealised form of human goodwill, but a tough reality that during its brief existence had already begun to enact the measures of the proletarian dictatorship.

The bulk of this chapter deals with these developments, giving detailed attention to five key texts from Engels. The first text is *The Housing Question* (1872–1873), where Engels broaches the connection between the commune and the proletarian dictatorship, while the second and third texts—the 'Introduction' to Marx's *The Civil War in France* and the critique of the Erfurt Program (both from 1891)—make the connection far more explicit. The fourth text was the 1895 introduction to the newly edited book, Marx's *The Class Struggles in France, 1848–1850*, where Engels struggled mightily against the right-wing tendency in the German Social-Democratic Party. The final text is a little earlier, from an 1890 letter to Conrad Schmidt. This text connects political power (*Macht*), economic force (*Potenz*) and *Gewalt* itself. These significant connections open up the treatment of socialist *Gewalt* in the final part of the chapter. Or rather, it deals with direct references to socialist *Gewalt* and authority, which make clear that the whole treatment of proletarian dictatorship is actually an elaboration of what such *Gewalt* means.

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in Spain 'by violence [*gewaltsamen*] and were thus in open conflict with the government' (Engels 1873f, 331–332; 1873g, 590).

3.2 Defining Dictatorship

Engels deployed the terminology of proletarian dictatorship during two periods,[2] one between 1872 and 1874 in the aftermath of the Paris Commune, and the other between 1890 and 1891 as the Communists became a distinct political force—especially in the German Social-Democratic Party—with the resultant debates over theory and strategy. Each usage defines the term further, before Engels fixes more clearly on what it means for socialism in power.

Let us follow this process of clarification, from which two items become more important. To begin with, Engels distinguishes between individual and collective dictatorship. The former appears frequently in his texts, whether Bismarck, Gladstone, Palmerston, Louis Napoleon, and other state leaders, or opponents within the wider revolutionary movement. The latter often suffer from *Diktaturgelüst* and *Diktatur zu spielen*, with Bakunin especially—as the conflict with the Anarchists heated up in the 1870s—described as an individual dictator (Marx and Engels 1873a, 173, 175–176, 189, 254; 1873b, 462, 465–466, 482, 555; 1874, 480, 483, 496, 556; see also Engels 1874d, 388; Marx 1870a, 224). The Blanquists too tend towards a 'dictatorship of one or several individuals'.[3] In response, Engels stresses that after a communist revolution, a dictatorship should be collective, one of 'the entire revolutionary class, the proletariat' (Engels 1874c, 373). Whatever the vagaries of socialism in actual power after Engels's time, the theoretical point is clear.

Further, as he points out to the Proudhonists (another distinct current in the Paris Commune), the proletarian dictatorship is by no means exceptional or outside the mainstream. Every 'real proletarian party', he writes in *The Housing Question*, has a class policy according to which an independent political party is the primary condition of struggle and the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' is 'the immediate aim of the struggle' (Engels 1872–1873a, 63; 1872–1873b, 372).

More important is a clear step beyond Marx: the conflation of the Paris Commune with the dictatorship of the proletariat. As noted earlier, Marx was somewhat reluctant to make the connection, so much so that it became a contradiction that he sought to resolve. While the commune primarily concerns the relations of production, with decentralisation, overcoming repression and a free association of workers, the proletarian dictatorship deals with the means of production, is centralised and repressive, so as to crush the 'bourgeois dictatorship' and the counter-revolution. Marx's scattered efforts at a resolution of the contradiction began to shape a narrative that moves from dictatorship to commune, but it was a tentative beginning (Boer 2019).

Why does Engels make the move to connect the commune and proletarian dictatorship? And what are the implications for understanding socialism in power? The answer to the first question requires detailed analysis of the key texts, but the second

[2] Marx (1850a, 139; 1850b, 69) had already used the phrase in written form in 1850 and it may well have been part of their regular discussions, but Engels (1878) was not to use it in his writings until 1872.

[3] For a detailed refutation of the myth that 'dictatorship of the proletariat' has Blanquist origins, see Draper (1986, 34–39, 120–171, 264–268).

question may be answered briefly here, before returning to it later: in contrast to tendencies to focus on the Paris Commune and downplay the dictatorship of the proletariat, Engels reminds us both that the dictatorship of the proletariat is central to any form of socialist governance, especially in its early stages, and that the commune itself was not a quasi-utopian moment, but entailed measures that already began to destroy the old order.

In order to determine why and how Engels makes the connection, an examination of three key texts is needed. Let me quote them first:

> It does the Commune the greatest honour … that in all its economic measures the 'driving spirit' was … in accordance with the spirit of German scientific socialism. In the same way, when the so-called Blanquists made an attempt to transform themselves from mere political revolutionists into a socialist workers' faction with a definite programme … they … adopted, and almost literally at that, the views of German scientific socialism on the necessity of political action by the proletariat and of its dictatorship [*des Proletariats und seiner Diktatur*] as the transition [*Uebergang*] to the abolition [*Abschaffung*] of classes and, with them, of the state – views such as had already been expressed in the *Communist Manifesto* and since then on innumerable occasions (Engels, 1872–1873a, 62; 1872–1873b, 370).
>
> Of late the German philistine[4] has once more been filled with wholesome terror at the words: Dictatorship of the Proletariat. Well and good, gentlemen, do you want to know what this dictatorship looks like? Look at the Paris Commune. That was the Dictatorship of the Proletariat [*Das war die Diktatur des Proletariats*]' (Engels 1891v, 16; 1891w, 191).
>
> First. If one thing is certain it is that our party and the working class can only come to power [*Herrschaft*] under the form of a democratic republic [*Form der demokratischen Republik*]. This is even the specific form for the dictatorship of the proletariat [*spezifische Form für die Diktatur des Proletariats*], as the great French revolution has already shown (Engels 1891x, 49–50; 1891y, 227).

In the first text—*The Housing Question* from 1872 to 1973—the conflation is oblique, while in the second it is clearest. Each text has its own particular context and points, to which I now turn.

3.3 The Housing Question (1872–1873)

The immediate context for the quotation from *The Housing Question* is an argument with a certain Adolf Mühlberger's defence of Proudhonism (in reply to earlier criticisms by Engels).[5] It is not necessary to follow the twists and turns of this long criticism, for the relevant point is that when it came to actual revolutionary action and particularly the exercise of power and the first steps in trying to construct socialism, workers adopted the practical measures of German scientific socialism—that is, the

[4] The original manuscript had '*sozialdemokratische Philister* [Social Democratic philistine]', which the editors of *Die Neue Zeit* replaced with '*deutsche Philister* [German philistine]'.

[5] Mühlberger's articles originally appeared in a series in *Der Volkstaat*. Engels also engages with Mühlberger's *Die Wohnungsfrage. Eine sociale Skizze. Separat-Abdruck aus dem 'Volksstaat'*. Leipzig, 1872.

proposals put forward by Engels and Marx. The only example available was the Paris Commune, to which Engels turns to back up his point. Thus, the (Proudhonist) economic measures[6] soon revealed that practice took one on the path of scientific socialism. So also with political measures, for which the Blanquists in the commune were responsible.[7] They too, Engels is keen to point out, went against their principles of minority dictatorship by a small hard core of revolutionaries and also adopted the communist program, including the 'necessity of political action by the proletariat and of its dictatorship [*des Proletariats und seiner Diktatur*]'.

While the connection between the commune and the proletarian dictatorship is somewhat oblique, the connection has indeed been made.[8] Two other relevant issues arise from the text. To begin with, we find a clear narrative of how power might work after a revolution: the proletarian dictatorship functions 'as the transition [*Uebergang*] to the abolition [*Abschaffung*] of classes and, with them, of the state' (Engels 1872–1873a, 62; 1872–1873b, 370). Note the narrative: proletarian dictatorship; transition; abolition of classes; and abolition of the state. Later it would become the 'dying away of the state' (in distinction from the Anarchists), but all of this requires political action by the proletarian dictatorship after it has seized power through a revolution. With his typical clarity, Engels here specifies what Marx began to explore in his later writings (from 1871) but never made explicit.[9]

Further, Engels adds an intriguing comment to the sentence I have been discussing. He writes that what may be called the post-revolutionary narrative had already been 'expressed in the Communist Manifesto and since then on innumerable occasions' (Engels 1872–1873a, 62; 1872–1873b, 370). This is a curious point, for the Communist Manifesto of 1848 does not use 'dictatorship of the proletariat', let alone any direct observation concerning the state. Instead, it includes centralisation and repression, which become part of a 'course of development [*Laufe der Entwicklung*]' in which class distinctions and antagonisms disappear, and 'public power [*öffentliche Gewalt*]' loses its political character to be replaced with an 'association [*Assoziation*]' characterised by 'the free development of each' as 'the condition for the free development of all' (Marx and Engels 1848a, 481–482; 1848b, 505–506). The closest the Communist Manifesto comes to a proletarian dictatorship is the usage of 'despotic inroads [*despotischer Eingriffe*]'. In light of the later clarity and sharpening of terminology by Engels, especially in the aftermath of the Paris Commune, the Communist Manifesto's proposal appears somewhat embryonic and idealistic. What are we to make of the claim by Engels—and indeed by Marx two decades earlier (1850c, 354;

[6] The following examples are given: 'abolition of night work in the bakeries, prohibition of monetary fines in the factories, confiscation of shut-down factories and workshops and handing them over to workers' associations' (Engels 1872–1873a, 61; 1872–1873b, 370).

[7] Engels refers to a text—*Internationale et révolution*—published in 1872 by Blanquist fugitives from the commune in London, in which they put forward their position in light of experiences in the commune.

[8] It may also be suggested that Engels appropriated earlier criticisms of the commune as a collective dictatorship. See Draper (1986, 18–21) for an outline of the development of this anti-communist criticism.

[9] For a detailed analysis of all the relevant texts, see Boer (2019).

1850d, 387–88)—that the Communist Manifesto already contained the idea of the proletarian dictatorship, as well as its transitional role in the eventual dissolution of classes and the state? We may read this claim in two ways. Strictly speaking, there is no literal mention of the dictatorship of the proletariat in the Communist Manifesto. The term itself appears only later in the works of both Engels and Marx. At the same time, most of the components of such a dictatorship are present: repression of the old ruling class, despotic inroads into bourgeois production, and centralisation of working class *Gewalt*. At the time, the description still needed a name, which was soon to come.

3.4 Introduction to the Third Edition of Marx's 'The Civil War in France' (1891)

If the conflation between commune and proletarian dictatorship was oblique in 1872–1873, it was perfectly clear almost two decades later. In his introduction to the third edition of Marx's *The Civil War in France*, Engels writes: 'do you want to know what this dictatorship looks like? Look at the Paris Commune. That was the Dictatorship of the Proletariat [*Das war die Diktatur des Proletariats*]' (Engels 1891v, 16; 1891w, 191). The commune is the proletarian dictatorship. Notably, Marx's text in this case does not mention the proletarian dictatorship,[10] so it is Engels who makes the connection.

However, the sentences I have quoted come at the conclusion of the introduction, with the phrase *Diktatur des Proletariats* being the arresting and challenging last words.[11] The lead-up to the conclusion is an extremely intriguing text, of which two features are important for the present analysis. The first concerns the effort to strengthen the measures undertaken by the Paris Commune so as to bring it much closer to the proletarian dictatorship. The second identifies a significant linguistic struggle as Engels attempts to describe structures that resemble a state in so many respects but which is at the same time not a state as he had defined it.

In terms of proletarian muscle, let me begin with the following: the decrees of the commune were 'in the direct interest of the working class and in part cut deep *[tief einschneidend]* into the old order of society' (Engels 1891v, 11; 1891w, 185). Engels is keen to emphasise that this attack on the old order took place precisely when elected workers were in control and the commune's class character became apparent. But what measures? They are the ones that thoroughly challenge the separation between

[10] It appears in another text republished a little later as *The Class Struggles in France, 1848 to 1850*—see below.

[11] The challenge was mainly directed at the '*sozialdemokratische Philister* [Social-Democratic philistine]', about whom I will have more to say in a moment. Notably, the text was changed by the editors of *Die Neue Zeit* and in the subsequent publication of Marx's text in book form to '*deutsche Philister* [German philistine]'. This alteration—most likely with Engels's grudging consent—may have had as much to do with presenting a united front to external critics as it did with softening the force of Engels's text.

state and society, so that the commune's forms of governance began to become enmeshed within society. These include: replacing the standing army with a militia from the whole population (a position dear to Engels given his long-standing insights into military matters); limited differences in pay; factories to be reopened and run by worker cooperatives; closing of employment offices run by police appointees; and the institution of radical democratic practices. Let me say a little more on the last point.

Engels emphasises two features of the commune's structures of governance: universal suffrage for all administrative, judicial and educational posts, with the right to recall; and pay for officials that was no more than pay for common workers. Engels points out that such measures were effective barriers against 'place-hunting and careerism', as well as ensuring continuous accountability through the right to recall at any time. Lest we be tempted to see here a celebration of a socialist form of liberal-bourgeois democracy, or perhaps social democracy itself, we should note the following: Engels speaks of 'universal suffrage for those concerned [*der Betheiligten*]', indeed that the right of recall was exercised by 'these same concerned ones [*dieselben Betheiligten*]' (Engels 1891v, 15).[12] *Betheiligte* (in our time spelled *Beteilegte*) is crucial here, for it designates a person who is involved, who is a participant. And which participants does Engels mean? The workers of the commune. They are entitled to vote and not the exploiters of the former ruling class or indeed any enemies of the commune. This is 'universal suffrage [*allgemeinem Stimmrecht*]' within the new structure. Here lie the seeds of what would later become, in rather different contexts, socialist democracy, in which the vast majority—workers and peasants—exercise rule.

All of these measures had the effect of beginning the process of overcoming the separation of state and society characteristic of the old bourgeois order. Even the Proudhonists and Blanquists (whom we already met in *The Housing Question*), with their respective positions concerning economic measures and political structures, began to fall into line. Thus, the Proudhonists soon realised the need for large cooperatives in factories (rather than small peasant and craft independence), and the Blanquists gave up their conspiratorial politics centred around a small and highly disciplined band—dictatorship of the few—and instituted measures that can only be described as the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Thus far, we have focused on internal measures enacted by the commune, but Engels also offers an external comparison to show what precisely was being destroyed. His preferred example is the United States, since it was regarded at the time as the most advanced form of the bourgeois state. Although even this state was meant to be the servant of society, an 'instrument' in the service of the people, it had instead become dominated by two 'cartels', two 'great gangs of political speculators' that alternatively take possession of state power and exploit it by corrupt means and for corrupt ends. Engels suggests that the people of the United States had not initially intended this outcome, but they have become burdened with a yoke they can no longer throw off: ostensibly, he writes, the government was meant to be the

[12] Translation mine.

servant of the people, but in reality it—through the cartels—dominates and plunders the people. The cartels have become the masters.

The commune offered a stark contrast, entailing a 'shattering [*Sprengung*] of the former state power and its replacement [*Erstezung*] by a new and truly democratic one' (Engels 1891v, 15; 1891w, 190). Or as he puts is slightly earlier, the commune recognised that the working class 'could not go on managing the old state machine'. To avoid defeat, it must 'do away with all the old repressive machinery [*Unterdrückungsmaschinerie*] used against itself … and safeguard itself against its own deputies and officials' (Engels 1891v, 14; 1891w, 189). That the commune was defeated may in part be attributed to the fact that it did not have enough proletarian muscle, did not exercise the proletarian dictatorship as strongly as it should have done.

The second question arising from this text concerns a linguistic struggle: what should the new structure that the commune began to institute be called? On the one hand, Engels is bound by his whole theory of the state as a separated public power. In this piece, he writes of the bourgeois state in the United States becoming a master and exploiter, an instrument of corrupt cartels. He also writes that the victorious proletariat will at some point be able to 'discard the entire rubbish of the state [*den ganzen Staatsplunder von sich abzuthun*]' at some point (Engels 1891v, 16).[13] This moment may be delayed, awaiting an entire generation that had grown up in new and free social conditions, but come it must.

On the other hand, he ventures into new territory with other observations. Most obviously, the new measures instituted by the commune include elections to administrative, educational and judicial posts. These are governing roles, as are the decrees issued by the commune that began to reveal a new structure. At two other moments, Engels's sentences almost lead him to speak of a new type of state, but he stops short, knowing that such a statement would contradict his whole theory of the state. The first sentence has already been quoted: the 'former state power [*bisherigen Staatsmacht*]' must be shattered and replaced or 'substituted [*Ersetzung*] by a new, truly democratic one [*eine neue, in Wahrheit demokratische*]'. A new a truly democratic what? Engels does not and could not write '*Staat*' to complete his point, so what he means is left begging—for now (see Chap. 4). The second sentence I have also discussed. It mentions that the working class, once in power, could not continue managing with 'the old state machine', indeed that has to do away with all 'the old repressive machinery'. What replaces it? Engels does not write 'new state machine', for that would be going too far. Instead, he states that the commune had to 'safeguard itself [*sich sichern*] against its own deputies and officials' through recall at any time and without exception. It is not a new state machinery, but it is a security mechanism to deal with those in administrative and organisational positions. On both occasions, the sentences seem to be leading to a new type of governance, if not mechanisms formerly managed by state structures, but Engels either leaves the term hanging or replaces it with another.

[13] The standard English translation has 'throw the entire lumber of the state on the scrap heap' (Engels 1891w, 190). While this rendering captures the general sense, it misses the import of *Staatsplunder*, state rubbish or junk.

By now it should be clear that Engels is struggling with the appropriate language. He occasionally risks falling into the language of 'state', but then catches himself. I have already suggested that Engels is beginning to indicate an enmeshed type of governance, one that is not separated from society but in its midst. This position will become clearer later, but in this text we have a tension, betrayed by the language. Unable to resolve the tension, Engels invokes the dictatorship of the proletariat as his solution; but it is not merely the proletarian dictatorship on its own, for he identifies it explicitly with the commune. While this may at one level seem like a solution by fiat, with the bonus that it would rattle many of his readers, at another level it contains a deeper truth: since the commune had begun to destroy previous state forms, it really was an expression of the proletarian dictatorship. No romanticisation of the commune here and a soft-pedalling on such a dictatorship. In short, Engels says: if you want the commune, you must also have the dictatorship of the proletariat.

3.5 Critique of the Erfurt Program (1891)

The introduction to Marx's *The Civil War in France* was written on 18 March, 1891; three months later, between 18 and 27 June, 1891, Engels composed another text that also connected the commune with the proletarian dictatorship. In this case, it was a critical response to the draft party program that had been prepared for the up-coming Erfurt Congress (Engels 1891x, 1891y).[14] This would be a crucial event, since it would revise the initial unification program of the German party, achieved at the Gotha Congress on 1875. Engels was keen to ensure that the new program would reflect more clearly the positions of scientific socialism. More of that in a moment, for some background to these developments is already overdue.

Engels's texts from the first years of the 1890s appeared at a time when the communist movement worldwide had made considerable progress. Political parties had established themselves and gained hundreds of thousands of members, especially in Germany. It was a situation that produced extensive debate over theory, policies and programs. The catch was that they now were able to operate largely within the structures of the bourgeois state and its form of democracy. Pressure grew to soften communism's more radical edges, since some felt that these threatened the new-found legitimacy of the parties in question. The push for moderation was enhanced by the infamous anti-socialist laws instigated by Bismarck from 1878 to 1890. Even though support for the German Social-Democratic Party grew during this period, questions arose. Should the party continue to advocate 'illegal' means, such as revolution and proletarian dictatorship? Or should it be content to work within the existing structures and pursue peaceful transition? As an old revolutionary hand, Engels could see the need to be sensitive to the mood of the times, adjusting strategy where necessary and warning against untimely insurrection where it would simply reinforce

[14] Correspondence also indicates Engels's focus on the Erfurt congress (Engels 1891k, 23; 1891l, 119; 1891q, 125; 1891r, 209–210).

suppression. But he also insisted on core revolutionary positions, especially when he saw them threatened. The dictatorship of the proletariat was one such position, which he felt called upon to defend and uphold especially in the early 1890s. Even more, he was adamant that a gentle and idealistic image of the commune—harking back to the utopian communism against which he and Marx had struggled in earlier decades—was a distortion.

In this context, the Erfurt congress and its program would be crucial. As part of his preparation for the congress, Engels had dusted off Marx's notes from the Gotha congress.[15] Why had they not been published earlier? Karl Liebknecht, as editor of *Vorwärts*, was the main culprit. Although the text had been circulated in the 1870s in manuscript form, Liebknecht saw to it that the text—with its explicit invocation of the dictatorship of the proletariat—was not published and would certainly 'raise heaven and earth' to block it once again (Engels 1891i, 10; 1891j, 107). In light of this situation, Engels suggested to Kautsky that it might be published in Vienna, or better in *Neue Zeit*, with less circulation but under Kautsky's editorship (Engels 1891g, 5; 1891h, 103).[16] The latter agreed and Engels could not wait for its appearance, writing to Sorge that its publication would be a 'bombshell'. Sorge may be delighted, but it would cause 'rage and indignation among a good many people in Germany' (Engels 1891a, 12; 1891b, 109). Efforts were indeed made to suppress the issue of *Neue Zeit*—with parliamentary Social Democrats actually trying to make use of the relics of the anti-Socialist law—but when that effort failed, Marx'stext was republished in *Vorwärts* itself (Engels 1891k, 22; 1891l, 118). This did not stop what Engels called the 'great wrath' in the party's central committee, as well as the parliamentary faction,[17] to the extent that they issued a statement that the text had appeared without their knowledge and boycotted Engels for some time (Engels 1891s, 27; 1891t, 123; 1891c, 30–31; 1891d, 126; 1891m, 1891n).

In late June of 1891, Engels followed up the publication of Marx's text with his critique of the draft program for Erfurt.[18] Some of the commentary focuses on specific wording, but the core—to which Engels devotes most of his energy—concerns political demands. He identifies two, one concerning the need for a unified state (which I leave aside here)[19] and the tension between peaceful and revolutionary transition. While Engels understands the reasons (see above) why the 'opportunist'

[15] In December of 1890, Engels wrote to Kautsky concerning the text, but urged the latter to 'tell no one else about it yet' (Engels 1890e, 522; 1890f, 90).

[16] The party's right-wing was not the only interested party, for Engels also had to account for censorship and the German police. He writes to Kautsky that any words omitted should be replaced by dots, while amended passages would require notes with explanations.

[17] Draper gives a relatively detailed account of what he calls the 'rumpus in the Reichstag', where conservative politicians were keen to pin 'dictatorship' on the socialists, while the right-wing parliamentary representatives of the party did their best to distance themselves from Marx's text (Draper 1986, 312–315; see also Engels 1891o, 1891p, 1891e, 1891f).

[18] For the original text of the program, see MEGA I.32, *Apparat*, pp. 691–694, and its English translation in MECW 27, pp. 595–597.

[19] Engels strongly prefers a unified rather than federal republic (a concern from his youth). This intriguing discussion may be seen as a forerunner of the detailed debates leading up to and after the Russian Revolution. Would they pursue a 'cultural-national' approach, seeking to federate the

tendency in the party favours the transition in a 'cosy, peaceful way',[20] and while he entertains the possibility in places where peoples' representatives have all power in their hands (France, United States, even the United Kingdom), he simply cannot see it happening in Germany, where the parliamentary system is a 'fig-leaf for absolutism'. Engels knows that any discussion of the deeply conservative German system is 'dangerous [*gefährlich*]', yet this system has to 'be attacked [*angegriffen werden*]'. As he warms to the topic, the language becomes more militant: developments will lead not so much to a peaceful transition but to the need to 'burst' the shell of the old social order, like a crab 'violently breaks [*gewaltsam sprengen*]' its shell. Even more, it will become necessary to 'break the fetters [*die Fesseln … zu sprengen habe*]' of the old semi-absolutist order. Not being aware of this need, not debating it at the congress, would leave the party ill-prepared at the crucial moment (even if all of these items could not in the current climate be included in the program).

By now, Engels has prepared the ground for his identification of 'ticklish, but very significant points'.

> First. If one thing is certain it is that our party and the working class can only come to power [*Herrschaft*] under the form of a democratic republic [*Form der demokratischen Republik*]. This is even the specific form for the dictatorship of the proletariat [*spezifische Form für die Diktatur des Proletariats*], as the great French revolution has already shown (Engels 1891x, 49–50; 1891y, 227).

Let us begin with the second sentence, where the dictatorship of the proletariat appears in conjunction with the 'great French revolution'. Despite efforts to identify the revolution in question with that begun in 1789 (Guérin 1959, 38), the reference is to the revolution of 1871 and the commune (Draper 1986, 319). On this question, the date of writing is important: as noted earlier, Engels wrote his critique in June of 1891, a little over three months after he had explicitly equated the commune with the proletarian dictatorship in his introduction to Marx's *The Civil War in France*.[21]

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many nationalities within the state, or would they seek a deeper unity through class that would then provide for and foster a whole new level of diversity? For a full analysis of these debates see Boer (2017, 141–186).

[20] Or, as he puts it more strongly to Kautsky in a letter from 29 June, 1891: 'the conciliatory opportunism of the *Vorwärts* and the clean-joyous-devout-free [*frischfrommfröhlichfreie*] "ingrowing [*Hineinwachsen*]" of the old filth [*Sauerei*] "into socialist society"' (Engels 1891q, 125; 1891r, 210). Translation modified. As Draper notes (1986, 318), *frischfrommfröhlichfreie* was a slogan of the *Turnverein* (gymnastics movement) established by Friedrich Ludwig Jahn in 1811, with the explicit aim of creating a healthy and morally robust population. A liberal nationalist, who desired a united Germany, Jahn's approach was later appropriated by the Nazis.

[21] Other references indicate that both Engels and Marx referred to 1789, 1839, 1848 and 1871 as 'French revolutions'. For example, the minutes of General Council of the First International (23 January and 4 June, 1872) use 'French revolution' to refer to the Paris Commune (*General Council* 1964, 87, 215); in a letter of 1871 to Kugelmann, Marx speaks of 'the next attempt of the French revolution' (Marx 1871d, 205; 1871e, 131); in a number of letters, Engels and Marx refer to 1848–1850 as the 'French Revolution' (Engels 1885a, 271; 1885b, 251; Marx 1852a, 504; 1852b, 61; 1870b, 503; 1870c, 511); in 1851 Engels refers to the 'the first French Revolution' of 1789 (Engels 1851c, 223; 1851d, 470); and in 'The Mark', Engels speaks of the 1789, 1830 and 1848 revolutions (Engels 1882a, 641–642; 1882b, 454–455).

In this light, the 'form of a democratic republic' makes sense. Engels does not mean a bourgeois democracy, but what would come to be called socialist democracy. Not a few interpreters have opted for the identification with the form of democracy under a capitalist state (Nimtz 2000, 268–269; Ware 2019, 162–163), an identification that may be supported by Engels's reference—few lines earlier—of the parliamentary systems of France, the United States and the United Kingdom. In these contexts, he entertains the possibility that a workers' party may actually use bourgeois suffrage to attain some of its goals. But this is not the meaning here, for it runs against the tone of Engels's criticisms of the draft Erfurt program. Instead, all turns on the dictatorship of the proletariat: not only did this appear in the commune of the 'great French revolution', but it also takes on the form of democratic republic. *This* is the form *for* (*für*) a proletarian dictatorship.

What does Engels mean by 'democracy'? He provides a hint with the minimal suggestion that the program should at least include the phrase, 'concentration of all political power [*aller politischen Macht*] in the hands of the people's representatives [*Volksvertretung*]' (Engels 1891x, 50; 1891y, 227). Who are the 'people' represented by this body?[22] Three months earlier, Engels had specified that the commune's practice of universal suffrage was only 'for those concerned [*der Betheiligten*]' and that the exercise of recall was to be undertaken by 'these same concerned ones [*dieselben Betheiligten*]' (Engels 1891v, 15). As I pointed out earlier, 'those concerned' are the workers of the commune and not the former ruling class or counter-revolutionary enemies of the commune. The reference to 'democratic republic' and 'people's representatives' in the critique of the Erfurt Program should be seen in this light.[23] Yes, Engels says, the commune was a form of democracy, but not like any form that had been seen before. In the midst of the struggles of the early 1890s, Engels sought to rescue the commune—the only example thus far of workers seizing power—from those who would see it as a modified form of bourgeois democracy. Instead, suggests Engels, the very definition of democracy must be rethought, a rethinking that would find its most succinct expression many years later in Mao Zedong's 'democratic dictatorship'. As for the Erfurt Program, it was substantially revised in light of Engels's criticisms and written up in its final form by Kautsky, who also provided a crucial explanatory text that came to guide the formation of subsequent communist parties (SPD 1891a, 1891b; Kautsky 1892a, 1892b).

[22] *Volksvertretung* may also be rendered as 'representative body of the people'.

[23] Thus, it is not necessary to suggest that dictatorship of the proletariat refers to the class character of the workers' state, while 'democratic republic' refers to its political form or clothing (Draper 1986, 321–322).

3.6 Introduction to Marx's 'The Class Struggles in France' (1895)

Thus far, I have considered three texts where Engels argues that the commune and proletarian dictatorship were one and the same, with the effect of rescuing the commune from drifting out of context and becoming an idealised image of comradely cooperation. By pointing out that it was the first real exercise of the dictatorship of the proletariat—however short-lived and tentative it might have been—Engels made it clear that the commune was a tough exercise, full of the harsh realities of the proletarian dictatorship. In short, the two could not be separated. To do so would risk relegating the dictatorship of the proletariat to the marginal status of an embarrassing 'problem'.

As we have seen, this theoretical development took place in the midst of struggle, in which the moderating wing of the increasingly large German Social-Democratic Party sought to discard the proletarian dictatorship and advocate peaceful transition to socialism within the framework of bourgeois democracy. This struggle continued into the 1890s, as Engels edited and republished Marx's earlier works, in which the latter had begun using the terminology of proletarian dictatorship. The next important moment in this struggle was over Engels's 1895 introduction to Marx's *The Class Struggles in France, 1848 to 1850* (Engels 1895l, 1895m). While Engels did not use 'dictatorship of the proletariat' in his introduction, Marx had deployed it for the first time in the text Engels was introducing.

Some background: Marx's original text had been published as a series of articles in *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* over 1849–1850. By the 1890s, it was decided by the editorial board of the German Social-Democratic Party to gather the articles and publish them together as a distinct book, so they approached Engels for advice and with a request to write an introduction. After some hesitation, Engels agreed, sending three articles that Marx had written and suggesting a fourth chapter that he had gathered from later material (with parts written by himself and parts by Marx) to be entitled 'The Abolition of Universal Suffrage in 1850' (Engels 1895g, 410; 1895h, 444). The title of the whole work, *The Class Struggles in France, 1848 to 1850*, was also proposed by Engels. Soon afterwards, he also sent the introduction to the editors.

This introduction includes a long assessment of the situation in the 1890s with regard to military action by insurgents, street fighting and barricades. With his long-standing military knowledge, Engels assesses the changing circumstances in terms of tactics, weaponry and perceptions of the public in response to revolutionaries. He also notes the rise of communist parties as electoral forces, urging caution and careful assessment of the new context before engaging in such actions. The risk of failure is even greater and the possibility of moral victory attained in earlier efforts has largely vanished. Yet he firmly holds to the need for revolutionary action in the future, which would have to be carefully considered and revised: fewer skirmishes before a major revolution are more likely, but revolution is still required.

The fate of the introduction is telling.[24] Upon receiving the text for publication, the executive of the Social-Democratic Party became anxious yet again. As with earlier occasions (see above), they were torn between immense respect for Engels's authority and their delicate political position in Germany. Not only were the anti-socialist laws still fresh in memory and experience, but the Reichstag was also debating in the early months of 1895 yet another law aimed at preventing a 'coup d'état'. Thus, the editors were working at a feverish pace to complete all of the planned publications in case the law came into effect (Engels 1895k, 453), but they were also keen not to aggravate the situation. Would Engels please tone down the excessive revolutionary tenor of the piece so as not to incite the authorities? He was sent a copy-edited text in which all references to future revolutionary militancy were altered or excised. At times it was a phrase, at times a sentence and at times a whole paragraph. In his reply to Richard Fischer in March of the same year, Engels was clearly unhappy with the efforts to subscribe to absolute legality under any circumstances. Nothing can be gained, he writes, by 'advocating complete abstention from force'; no person, no party would forfeit the right to resist 'by force of arms [*Waffen in der Hand*]' (Engels 1895i, 424; 1895j, 457). Yet, he writes that he understands the party's position in Germany and so relented on some editorial changes but resisted five others that would have changed the meaning entirely. A couple of weeks later, he wrote to Kautsky that his text had suffered to some extent from the 'apprehensive [*umsturzvorlagenfurchtsamlichen*] objections, inspired by the Subversion Bill, of our friends in Berlin', but he also acknowledged that in light of circumstances he 'could not but take account' of these objections (Engels 1895a, 446; 1895b, 480). From the side of the editors, perhaps Bebel's letter to Engels a few days later captures the tensions best: 'We do not ask you to say something that you do not wish to say—or may not say—but we ask you *not* to say something which, if said at this time, would be embarrassing for us' (Blumenberg 1965, 795).[25]

The story has further twists. Under Liebknecht's guidance (yet again), the editors disregarded Engels's reservations and pressed ahead with all of the changes they had made. They published selections from the introduction in the leading article of *Vorwärts*, number 76, on 30 March, 1895, under the title 'Wie man heute Revolutionen macht'. The authorship was attributed to Engels. Upon receipt of the issue of *Vorwärts*, Engels was incensed. The next day he wrote to Kautsky: 'I was amazed to see today in the *Vorwärts* an excerpt from my "*Introduction*" that had been *printed without my prior knowledge* and tricked out in such a way as to present me as a peace-loving proponent [*friedfertiger Anbete*] of legality *quand même*'. He requested that the complete original text should be published in *Neue Zeit* so that 'this disgraceful impression [*schmähliche Eindruck*] may be erased' (Engels 1895c, 452; 1895d, 486). And he promised to give Liebknecht and others involved a piece of his mind for disfiguring and 'perverting [*zu entstellen*]' his views. Neither would eventuate. As for the letter to Liebknecht, perhaps it was the advancing throat cancer—from a life of enjoying tobacco and alcohol—that prevented him from castigating those involved.

[24] For a useful overview of the events, see Möser (1990).

[25] Translation mine.

Perhaps the letter has been lost. As for the anticipated rectification in *Neue Zeit*, the journal published the introduction in the heavily edited form in numbers 27 and 28. And the book, *Die Klassenkämpfe in Frankreich 1848 bis 1850*, appeared in the same year with the introduction in the form that the editors deemed fit (Marx 1895, 3–19).

What are we to make of this important moment? As mentioned earlier, Marx had deployed 'dictatorship [*Diktatur*] of the working class' and then 'class dictatorship [*Klassendictatur*] of the proletariat' for first time in the material that was now being published in book form (Marx 1850a, 139, 192; 1850b, 69, 127). Although Engels did not use either term in his introduction, he was by now well known as an advocate of such a dictatorship, which he saw as coterminous with the Paris Commune. Clearly, many in the German party were uncomfortable with the idea and its militancy. So we may resort to a betrayal narrative, in which the 'revisionists'—taking advantage of Engels's failing health—betrayed the need for revolution for the sake of parliamentary reform.[26] Or we may follow the line that Engels had realised the need for peaceful parliamentary means within the structures of the bourgeois state (Hunt 2010, 238–239). By contrast, Engels may be the best guide here, as reflected in his observations to Paul Lafargue a couple of days after he became aware of what had happened. He accuses Liebknecht of playing a 'fine trick [*Streich*]' on him by taking from his introduction 'everything that could serve his purpose in support of peaceful and anti-violent [*Gewaltanwendung verwerfende*] tactics at any price', especially in light of the threat of new laws against the socialists. At this point, we can easily suggest that Engels had been betrayed, but then he writes: 'I preach those tactics only for the *Germany of today* and even then with many *reservations* [*mit erheblichen* Vorbehalten]'. Despite his best instincts, Engels realises the need for such an approach in a particular situation. In certain circumstances, it is necessary to adapt for a time in order to advance the cause. Some may call this 'opportunism', but if so, it is a productive opportunism, a needed zigzag so that the project may continue. Liebknecht, Engels feels, lack this sense, seeing only black and white: 'Shades don't exit for him' (Engels 1895e, 458; 1895f, 489–490). In other words, communism requires not one or the other, not revolution or reform, but appropriate tactics for specific circumstances. Engels's legacy would come to fruition with subsequent communist leaders such as Lenin, Mao, Deng and indeed Xi Jinping.

[26] But who are the revisionists? Is Liebknecht one of them? Engels obviously thought so in 1895, with his efforts to water down the militant emphasis upon which he and Marx had always insisted. Yet Liebknecht would become part of the Spartacus League, being a leader of the Spartacist Uprising on 1919 in which he (and Rosa Luxemburg) were murdered. How about Kautsky? Lenin later identified Kautsky as a 'renegade' due to his advocacy of the ballot box and decrying of the Russian Revolution (Lenin 1918). Was it Bernstein (1899, 1993) with his advocacy of peaceful transition once the bourgeoisie saw the benefits of socialism. Now Kautsky becomes a radical, for he opposed Bernstein as the chief theoretician of the second generation (Kautsky 1899; Tudor and Tudor 1988).

3.7 Letter to Conrad Schmidt (1890): *Gewalt* is also an Economic *Potenz*

The final text concerning the dictatorship of the proletariat appeared a little earlier, in a letter to Conrad Schmidt in 1890. However, I deal with it at this point since it provides a transition to the next section on socialist *Gewalt*. The letter is one of a number that offer a more complex dialectical approach to the metaphors of 'base' and 'superstructure', especially in response to those who would read the metaphor in a mechanical and even reductionist fashion so that the economic base is active and the superstructural domains passive.[27] We do not need to go into the detail here, save to point out that Engels is keen to stress the relative autonomy of the various realms—political, legal, philosophical, religious, artistic and so on—in relation to economic factors. They act upon one another in a reciprocal fashion, in which the economic is determinative only 'in the last instance'. In the letter to Schmidt, Engels deals mostly with elements within the economic realm, particularly production, trade in commodities and trade in money (financialisation), in order to point out that they develop their own dynamic whilst interacting upon one another. A similar philosophical point applies to philosophy, religion and the state. Here he emphasises that although the state arises from the division of labour within society, it acquires a 'relative independence [*relativen Selbständigkeit*]' that enables it to 'react in turn upon the conditions and the course of production'. The two may be 'unequal forces [*ungleicher Kräfte*]' (Engels 1890a, 490; 1890b, 59–60), with the economic trend predominating, but the state is able to act in the current circumstances in three ways: it may work with the economic, oppose it, or it may block some lines of economic development and stipulate others.

Why opt for this emphasis here? In the previous chapter, we saw that Engels prevaricates on whether the state is relatively autonomous, is an instrument, or is imbued with the nature of the class exercising power. In that analysis, I focused on the instrument-nature tension, passing briefly over the question of relative autonomy. But here Engels presses the point that the state strives for the 'greatest possible independence [*möglichster Selbständigkeit*]', assuming a 'trend of its own' [*einer Eigenbewegung*]' (Engels 1890a, 490; 1890b, 60). Again, why? Engels has in his sights not merely the current context of Bismarck's transformation of Germany into the major European power (Bismarck had dramatically resigned only months earlier, on 18 March, 1890), where it was clear that the state had acted somewhat independently, but also on what might happen after a communist revolution and the exercise of socialism in power. Thus, after pointing to some of Marx's works where Marx emphasised the crucial role of politics (in *The EighteenthBrumaire* and in regard to the working day and the history of the bourgeoisie in *Capital*), Engels observes: 'Otherwise why should we be fighting for the political dictatorship of the proletariat if political power [*die politische Macht*] is economically powerless [*ohnmächtig*]?

[27] The four key letters are those to Joseph Bloch, Conrad Schmidt, Franz Mehring and Walther Borgius (Engels 1890c, 1890d, 1890a, 1890b, 1893a, 1893b, 1894a, 1894b).

Gewalt (i.e. state power [*Staatsmacht*]) is also an economic force [*ökonomische Potenz*]!' (Engels 1890a, 493; 1890b, 63).

Macht, Gewalt and *Potenz*—the semantic fields of the three terms obviously overlap. But let us take one at a time. *Macht*—with its senses of might, power and authority—is in fact Engels preferred usage earlier in the same text. He speaks of *die politische Macht* and *Staatsmacht* when emphasising the relative independence of the state in relation to economic matters. But in the sentence quoted, he invokes *Gewalt*, the dominant usage in most of his texts concerning the state. In this case, it appears as a solitary usage, and one may see it as simply another term for *Staatsmacht*. The parenthetical 'that is' may reinforce such an impression. However, *Gewalt* has a sharper edge than *Macht*, invoking the sense of violent force. So why deploy it here? It follows upon the invocation of 'dictatorship of the proletariat', which now has the specific qualifier, 'political'—*die politische Diktatur des Proletariats*. I propose that Engels is seeking to sharpen the sense of *Macht*, to ensure that he means not merely 'governmental power' with all its assumed parliamentary legitimacy within the framework of bourgeois democracy. And what does the proletarian dictatorship, the *Gewalt* or indeed *Staatsgewalt* exercised after a communist revolution, do? It works directly to change the very forces of production as a political actor.[28] Otherwise, why would the Communists bother if such a power was 'economically powerless [*ökonomisch ohnmächtig*]'? Now Engels deploys his third term, *ökonomische Potenz*. *Gewalt*, he writes, has economic potency. The semantic field of *Potenz* includes sexual potency, creative power, and economic and political potency. Engels's point in this sentence is that far from being economically powerless, the dictatorship of the proletariat—as *Gewalt* in its own right—is economically virile, creative and potent.

To sum up: for Engels, the dictatorship of the proletariat is an inescapable dimension of socialism in power and should never be abandoned. Already in the 1890s, he faced efforts in the wider communist movement to water it down or dispense with it altogether. Right-wing moderates, anxious not to incite the authorities of the bourgeois state, found the proletarian dictatorship distinctly embarrassing, if not alarming. Far better, then, to focus on Marx's glowing depiction of the Paris Commune, from which the proletarian dictatorship could be excised. Here we find a tendency that would appear later in Eurocommunism, as well as a number of thinkers who were more than keen to drop the proletarian dictatorship entirely, or at least soften it in light of a certain perception of the commune (Johnstone 1971; Balibar 1977, 58; Hunt 1984; Miliband 1991, 151; Nimtz 2000, 218–219; van Ree 2015, 77, 115; Ware 2019, 161–163). Not so, is Engels reply. In fact, the commune cannot be separated from the dictatorship of the proletariat, for they are one and the same. In its very being, the commune–albeit for too short a time—was the dictatorship in action. Or, as the letter to Conrad Schmidt puts it: the dictatorship of the proletariat is both political power and economic potency. In short, it is socialist *Gewalt*.

[28] Draper's observation (1986, 310) that the use of 'dictatorship of the proletariat' in this letter is 'tossed in' with 'extreme casualness', as a 'mere synonym for the conquest of political power', misses the point completely.

3.8 Socialist *Gewalt*

> It is recognised that force [*Gewalt*] also operates with revolutionary effect (Engels 1876–1877a, 35; 1876–1877b, 610).

By way of conclusion, let me focus on Engels's explicit use of *Gewalt* to speak not only of the dictatorship of the proletariat but also the communist project as such. He does so in two overlapping ways: in terms of seeking power through revolutionary action and in the actual exercise of power. Thus, we find that already in the early 1870s he began speaking of a 'real, powerful [*gewaltiges*] proletariat' (Engels 1874a, 381; 1874b, 629), or indeed of the right of the working class 'to *use violent force in order to realise* [mit Gewalt durchzusetzen] its demands' (Engels 1873a, 309; 1873b, 449). On this matter, he echoes Marx's observation in the same period: 'One day the worker will have to seize political power [*Gewalt*] to establish the new organisation of labour'. Unlike the early Christians, who disdained politics and failed to realise their kingdom on earth, 'it is violent force [*Gewalt*] which must be the lever of our revolution; it is violent force [*Gewalt*] which will have to be resorted to for a time in order to establish the rule of the workers' (Marx 1872a, 160; 1872b, 255). More concretely, what does this mean? In his notes to *Anti-Dühring*, Engels counters Dühring's aversion to struggle and arms, emphasising that 'a revolutionary party must know also how to struggle', for it will have 'to make the revolution'. To ensure that the party is prepared, Engels observes that universal conscription is actually an advantage: it 'should be taken advantage of by all to learn how to fight but particularly by those whose education entitles them to acquire the training of an officer in one year's voluntary service' (Engels 1876–1877a, 93; 1876–1877b, 609–610). As he sums up in perhaps the earliest version of what would become a communist catechism and then the Communist Manifesto, communist aims could be achieved by no other method than a 'democratic, violent [*gewaltsame*] revolution' (Engels 1846a, 54; 1846b, 82).

More extensive are Engels's comments on the exercise of power after a revolution. Let us begin with the notes Engels wrote (in German and French) for a speech at the International's London conference in 1871. In reply to the Anarchist push for the working class to abstain from political action, Engels writes: 'We want the *Abschaffung* (*l'abolition*) of classes. Sole means is political *Gewalt* (*domination*) in the hands of the proletariat' (Engels 1871c, 307; 1871d, 416; 1871e, 308; 1871f, 417). Not long afterwards and in the preface to the 1872 reprint of the Communist Manifesto, both Engels and Marx reflect on the implications of the Paris Commune: the proletariat 'for the first time held political power [*politische Gewalt*]' for two months, revealing that 'the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made State machinery, and wield it for its own purposes' (Marx and Engels 1872a, 96; 1872b, 175; see also Marx 1871c, 137).[29] Almost fifteen years later, Engels would

[29] Note also the observation already in 1850, in light of the 1848 revolutions in Europe, that the proletariat must seize *Staatsgewalt* in order to dispossess the bourgeoisie and gain control of the means of production (Marx and Engels 1850a, 258; 1850b, 281).

repeat the same point, in French: 'for the first time in its history, the working class seized political power [*pouvoir politique*]' (Engels 1886a, 169; 1886c, 406).[30]

While it may be possible to read this usage of *Gewalt* in terms of 'power' rather than the stronger reaches of the term's semantic field, a text from the same period clearly stresses the harder edge of the term. In response to the emerging Anarchist position, which advocated the abolition of all authority—from workers' participation in politics to the authoritarian state—Engels writes: 'A revolution is certainly the most authoritarian thing [*la cosa più autoritaria*]'.[31] It entails imposing the will of one part of the population on the other by means of weapons, and in order to ensure the success of the revolution, 'it must maintain this rule by means of the terror [*terrore*] which its arms inspire in the reactionaries'.[32] At this point, he invokes the Paris Commune, not only speaking of the 'authority of the armed people [*autorità di populo armato*]',[33] but also reproaching it for 'not having used it freely enough' (Engels 1873c, 86; 1873e, 425). It is this sense that we should read the observation in *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific* (originally in *Anti-Dühring*): after observing the internal dynamic of the contradictions of the capitalist mode of production, Engels writes, '*The proletariat seizes political power and turns the means of production into State property* (Engels 1880a, 576; 1891u, 620; 1880b, 320).[34] The initial French of this text, *la force publique*, in rendered in the German edition of 1891 as *Staatsgewalt*. Or as he puts it even more clearly in material added to *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*:

> *Proletarian Revolution.* – Solution of the contradictions. The proletariat seizes the public power [*pouvoir publique -> öffentliche Gewalt*], and by means of this power [*pouvoir -> Gewalt*] transforms the socialised means of production, slipping from the hands of the bourgeoisie, into public property (Engels 1880a, 580; 1891u, 625; 1880b, 325).

Engels's position on socialist *Gewalt* should by now be clear, as also its inescapable connection with the proletarian dictatorship and thereby the commune. But it is also connected with the 'gradual dissolution and ultimate disappearance [*allmähliche Auflösung und endlich das Verschwinden*]' of the state. Since this is the subject of the next chapter, where I deal with the careful choice of language—the state's dissolution and disappearance as 'one of the *final* results' of a proletarian revolution—in response to the Anarchists, I leave the analysis of such matters until later. Here it is important to note the language used to speak of the state. It is,

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[30] On this occasion, the German translation of the French offers *politische Macht* (Engels 1886b, 257). The same expression, in translation, would also appear in the English edition of 1888 (Engels 1888, 120).

[31] The German translation of the original Italian article has '*das autoritärste Ding*' (Engels 1873d, 308). For the build-up to this piece on authority, see a series of items from Engels (1851a, 186; 1851b, 435; 1871a, 365–366; 1871b, 285–286; 1872c, 372–373; 1872d, 293; 1872e, 389; 1872f, 307; 1872a, 1872b).

[32] For '*terrore*' the German translation has '*Schrecken*', with the senses of fright, horror and terror (Engels 1873d, 308).

[33] The German translation offers '*dieser Autorität des bewaffneten Volks*' (Engels 1873d, 308).

[34] Compare: Engels (1878, 444; 1894d, 267).

writes Engels in 1883, an organisation that has been focused on securing by 'armed force [*bewaffnete Gewalt*]', by an 'armed repressive [*bewaffneten Unterdrückungs*] State-force [*Staatsgewalt*]', the domination of the wealthy minority over the working majority. So much we have already seen, but what is the working class to do when it has power? It will need to possess 'the organised political force of the State [*die organisirte politische Gewalt des Staates*]' so as to 'trample down [*niederstampfen*]' capitalist class resistance—the counter-revolution—and 'organise society anew [*die Gesellschaft neu organisieren*]'.[35] This is not simply part of a wish-list, for the working class 'must [*muß*]' do so as its first [*zuerst*] task (Engels 1883a, 419; 1883b, 477–478).[36] On this matter, Engels is one with Marx, who writes in his notes on Bakunin that while the capitalist and other classes still exist, the proletariat 'must use *violent* means [*muß* gewaltsame *Mittel anwenden*]'. In other words, as long as the conditions that produce class struggle continue to exist, 'they must be cleared from the road or transformed by violent force [*müssen gewaltsam aus dem Weg geräumt oder umgewandelt werden*]', even to the point where the 'process of transformation [*Umwandlungsprozeß*]' must 'be accelerated by violent force [*gewaltsam beschleunigt werden*]' (Marx 1875, 630).[37]

One final point, which concerns the dialectic between objective and subjective factors. In *Anti-Dühring* Engels initially stresses the objective contradictions of the capitalist mode of production, which lead inexorably towards a communist revolution. At a crucial point, he identifies the subjective dimension. Using the analogy between social and natural forces (*Kräfte*), he describes the latter as working 'blindly, violently [*gewaltsam*], destructively [*zerstörend*]', but only as long as we do not understand them. But when we do, we are able to 'subject them more and more to our own will [*unserm Willen zu unterwerfen*]' so that we can attain 'our own ends [*unsre Zweck*]'. So also with social and economic forces: once we 'grasp [*begriffen*]' them, they can 'be transformed [*verwandelt werden*]' from 'demonic masters into willing servants' (Engels 1894c, 534; 1894d, 266). Obviously, this subjective dimension applies to socialism in power, which seeks to transform or convert (*verwandeln*) not only economic structures, but also political power.

3.9 Conclusion

We have arrived at a point that may be uncomfortable for some: Engels (and indeed Marx) was clearly a proponent of the necessary role of violent force (*Gewalt*) in both socialism seeking revolutionary power and in the early exercise of power after

[35] 'Trample down [*niederstampfen*]' and 'organise society anew [*die Gesellschaft neu organisieren*]' are my translations.

[36] Once again, Engels mentions that he and Marx had already elaborated such a position in the Communist Manifesto, an assertion he also made in *The Housing Question*. See the earlier treatment of this assertion.

[37] Translation mine.

such a revolution—not merely to transform the socio-economic conditions but also to deal with the counter-revolution. He increasingly emphasised the indispensable role of the dictatorship of the proletariat in the exercise of power, to the point of connecting it directly with the Paris Commune. Against those who would separate the two, stressing the calm and peaceful transition via bourgeois democracy into an idealised commune, or even the passage from the proletarian dictatorship to the commune (Ehrenberg 1992), Engels stressed ever more strongly that the commune was the proletarian dictatorship. Further, Engels was also—like Marx—very clear that socialist governance involves *Gewalt*.

This emphasis by Engels, particularly in the 1890s, raises a distinct question in relation to the narrative of stages we find elsewhere: according to this narrative, the proletarian dictatorship was to be the initial step towards and indeed a means to achieve the commune. Thus, the proletariat would need to exercise violent force to deal with the counter-revolution and decisively shift the forces and relation of production, but once this was achieved over a shorter or longer period, the proletarian dictatorship would give way to a structure somewhat like the commune.[38] The narrative was tentatively explored by Marx and we will see it come to the fore again in dealing with the enmeshed apparatus (Chap. 5), but the question is how such a narrative of stages relates to Engels's firm position that the Paris Commune was at one and the same time the dictatorship of the proletariat. There are a couple of viable answers: the first is that the connection between the commune and proletarian dictatorship was a tactical move by Engels in a particular context, but that overall he held to a theory of stages; the second is that Engels did not see the Paris Commune as an expression of developed or mature communism. It may have offered a glimpse or two, but no more. His introduction to Marx's *The Civil War in France* indicates that the second answer is better. While he reiterates the core findings of Marx, he does not engage in the enthusiastic praise for the commune that we find in Marx, especially in the earlier drafts of the text (Marx 1871a, 1871b). Instead, Engels emphasises the early and tentative nature of the commune's actions, its inability to go further due to the armed forces bearing down upon it, and the mistakes made—the most notable being that it did not use enough force. Thus, the commune is in fact part of the early stage, of the proletarian dictatorship, providing only a glimpse of what might come.

At this point, the topic of the next chapter begins to emerge, which concerns the difficult and oft-misunderstood concept of the falling or dying away of the state. Beyond that lies the anticipation of enmeshed governance and the dialectical transformation of baseline communism. Indeed, a hint of what is to come has already appeared with my earlier quotation from *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*. It speaks of a *pouvoir publique*, an *öffentliche Gewalt*, a public power that the proletariat seizes. The initial temptation is to identify this public *Gewalt* immediately with the state as a *separated* public *Gewalt*, particularly in light of earlier material. But this move is too hasty, for Engels and Marx also speak of a public *Gewalt* that is not so separated and that remains in the hands of workers and indeed peasant farmers. But this is to leap ahead, beyond the state's dying away. To that topic I now turn.

[38] Ehrenberg (1992) in particular emphasises this narrative, with good textual justification.

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Chapter 4
Abolition or Dying Away of the State?

Abstract Given the many misunderstandings concerning the 'dying away' of the state, this is the longest chapter. I begin by analysing debates among German socialists in the 1840s, finding that they *did not* urge the state's abolition (*Abschaffung*), annihilation (*Vernichtung*) and dialectical transformation (*Aufhebung*). With one exception: Max Stirner in *The Ego and Its Own* (1845) urged that the state should be abolished as an immediate and willed act. This would come to be the position of Bakunin particularly in 1870s, since he saw the state as the prime cause of exploitation. For Engels (and Marx), this made no sense: in light of their method, the state was a secondary phenomenon, arising from economic conditions and class struggle. Thus, a communist revolution would need to enact wide-sweeping changes to the forces and relations of production before aspects of the superstructure, such as the state, could be addressed. As the struggle with the Anarchists developed, we find an increasing emphasis that one of the final results of constructing socialism would be not the 'abolition' of the state, but its falling away, disappearance, going to sleep, or—as the third edition of *Anti-Dühring* of 1894 famously put it—its dying away.

Keywords Abolition of the state · Max Stirner · Mikhail Bakunin · Struggle with Anarchism · Dying away of the state

4.1 Opening Remarks

From socialist *Gewalt* we move to the dying away of the state. These two concepts may initially seem like a contradiction: how can you argue for both a proletarian dictatorship, which Engels equated with the commune, and at the same time propose that the state will die away? While initial hints for solving this contradiction will appear in the current chapter, the unexpected solution will be found in the next. The task for this chapter is to analyse the development of the concept of the state's dying away. Since it remains a somewhat controversial idea (for further detail, see the conclusion to this chapter), I proceed very cautiously, working with all of the available texts in order to ascertain precisely how this concept arose and what it means. The key conclusions are three. First, the terminology of the abolition (*Abschaffung*) of

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the state appears very rarely before 1850. This is true of Engels and Marx as it is of the radical circles in which they were involved. Among the latter, the state would undergo a transformation or sublation (*Aufhebung*) into very different structures. For Engels and Marx, *Aufhebung* is used for the qualitative transformation brought about by communism, although they do not mention the state directly in material from this time. Second, by 1850 they did begin to speak specifically of the *Abschaffung* of the state. At this point the term was borrowed from the slogans of others, especially Stirner, but—crucially—they already specify that this process would be a secondary and much later development. For the method they had been developing, the primary concern after a proletarian revolution would be the transformation of the 'base', of the forces and relations of the production. As a feature of the superstructure, the state had arisen as a separated public *Gewalt*; it would cease to be so only when socio-economic matters had been addressed. Third, terminological clarity emerged fully in the struggle with Bakunin and the Anarchists some two decades later, in the 1870s. Thus, one must distinguish clearly between the willed, subjective act of abolishing (*Abschaffung*) the state and the more natural, objective process of its dying away (*abstirben*). The latter term, along with the others such as fall away, dissolve and disappear, defined more clearly a position already in place by 1850.

The path to these conclusions is a relatively long one. In a little more detail: the first part of my analysis deals with the context of wider socialist debates in the 1840s. The result is intriguing, for there was little discussion of the abolition of the state as such. Instead, they spoke of the abolition of private property, of inheritance and occasionally money. When they came to speak of the state, they almost always advocated a transformation of the state rather than its abolition—this was true even of Proudhon. The one exception is Max Stirner, who clearly advocated the state's abolition. We find that when others engaged with Stirner's work—my initial example is Moses Hess, since he was closely connected with Engels and Marx in the early years—they did discuss the topic, but only in response to Stirner. The next step is to track the usage of three key terms in Engels's texts up 1850: *Abschaffung* (abolish), *Vernichtung* (anihilate) and *Aufheben* (sublate). Why these three terms? They appear in a key text by Stirner: the state can only 'be sublated [*aufheben*], annihilated [*vernichten*], abolished [*abschaffen*], not reformed' (Stirner 1845a, 240). The vast bulk of the painstaking textual work has been moved to an external appendix,[1] so in the main text I restrict my observations to the conclusions reached: *Abschaffung* is deployed primarily in relation to feudalism or acts internal to existing states; *Vernichtung* is used for counter-revolutionary acts and capitalism's effects; *Aufhebung* appears mainly in relation to contradictions internal to a capitalist system and the communist transformation. Notably none of them are deployed to speak of the abolition, annihilation or transformation of the state. This absence is also the case with half a dozen analyses of longer texts by Engels and Marx. We do find the *Abschaffung* of private property, the *Aufhebung* entailed in the qualitative changes entailed with communism (moving well beyond private property), but not the state

[1] Given the detailed textual analysis in the appendix, I have removed it from the text of the this book and located it at my website: roland-theodore-boer.net.

as such. The only exception—again—is the engagement with Stirner in *The German Ideology*. While Engels and Marx devote most of their energy to identifying logical fallacies with Stirner's objections to communism, when they come to his proposal concerning the state's *Abschaffung*, they identify its basis in sheer willpower and arbitrariness. This criticism would also turn out to be pertinent in relation Bakunin's later proposals.

One crucial feature does begin to emerge in these early texts: a necessary delay. Initially it concerns the abolition of private property (in Engels's 1847 catechism), but it comes fully into view in 1850 on two occasions. Simply put, any abolition of the state requires prior conditions, such as the abolition of classes. The terms may be borrowed from slogans current at the time, but the point is crucial. Dealing with the state is not the primary concern of Communists; its disappearance would happen only after more significant socio-economic matters were addressed. This position should not be a surprise, for it arises from the whole historical and dialectical materialist approach developed by Engels and Marx: the means and relations of production are the fundamental concern, even more so after a proletarian revolution; superstructural concerns, such as the state, are secondary.

This approach has a direct bearing on the struggle with Bakunin, some two decades later (the issue does not appear between 1850 and the late 1860s). On this matter, it was Engels who provided most of the material and the clarity of formulation. For Bakunin, the state was the primary cause of all oppression and exploitation, although he struggled to show how it had gained this fundamental role. Thus, the first act of a popular revolution would be to abolish the state, after which economic, social and other problems would be solved. And it would entail a distinct act of will, tapping into a wellspring of natural sentiment found among human beings. For Engels, Bakunin's proposals turned matters on their head: the primary concern after a communist revolution would be to transform the economic and social conditions, and—notably—to deal with the counter-revolution. For this the machinery of state is needed, specifically (as we saw in the previous chapter) in terms of socialist *Gewalt*. Only well afterwards, and as a long-term result of these interventions, would the state fall away, dissolve, disappear—all these terms are used. Indeed, Engels's usage becomes ever more careful, since he does not want the communist position to be confused with the subjectivist and willed act of the *Abschaffung* of the state—the Anarchist slogan. As Engels searched for a term to capture the communist position, he spoke—finally—of the state's dying away. It appears for the first time in the third edition of *Anti-Dühring*, which was published not long before his death: 'Der Staat wird nicht "abgeschaft", *er stirbt ab*' (Engels 1894a, 535). The analysis that follows shows that Engels had held this position since at least 1850, albeit with subsequent clarification in light of later struggles. Simply put: the dying away of the state would be one of the final consequences of the complex and long-drawn out process of constructing socialism.

4.2 The Socialist Context: Debates of the 1840s

Engels and Marx did not—obviously—develop their thought in a vacuum. A significant feature of the ferment of the 1840s concerned debates and developments among other young radicals, whether socialist, communist or amorphously anarchist. This section deals with the key texts by the most significant radical thinkers and (in some cases) practitioners of the 1840s: Saint-Simon, Fourier, Proudhon, Weitlingand Hess. In their works we find variations on three overlapping positions: (1) criticism of the authoritarian nature of the current state and, at times, all hitherto existing states; (2) abolition of the most obvious manifestations of exploitation, particularly in terms of private property, inheritance and money; (3) proposals for alternative structures. Notably, it is difficult indeed to find any of them speaking of the *Abschaffung* of the state as such. Instead, they preferred to speak of the *Aufhebung*—the sublation, or negation and replacement with a very different form—of the state. All of them offered suggestions as what these new structures might be, even if they never experienced them at first hand and were thus unable to analyse what they might actually be.

4.2.1 From Anti-Statism to Transforming the State

In more detail and beginning with the criticism of existing states, Proudhon wrote in his profoundly influential *What Is Property?* that the state 'was at first despotism, then monarchy, then aristocracy, today democracy, and always tyranny' (Proudhon 1840a,1840b, 60).[2] Many agreed. For example, Moses Hess—who initially worked closely with Engels and Marx—stated that all forms of government 'are in their essence the opposite of absolute freedom and equality'. It matters not whether they appear in the form of despotism, republic, hereditary monarchy or representative government, for 'all of them still harbour mastery and bondage' (Hess 1843a, 88; 1843b, 112).[3] Engels too agreed. Only a few years after Proudhon's *What Is Property?* appeared, Engels wrote enthusiastically that—for Proudhon—every type of government is 'objectionable', for all govern by force, in which the 'force of the majority oppresses the weakness of the minority'. To sum up, he paraphrases Proudhon, '"*Nous voulons l'anarchie!*" What we want is anarchy; the rule of nobody, the responsibility

[2] Elsewhere in the same work, he speaks of the state as the 'chief robber [*chef de bande*]', which 'sets the example of systematic pillage [*pillage en coupes réglées*] (Proudhon 1840a, 41; 1840b, 39). Further statements may be found on a similar theme (Proudhon 1851, 219; 1849, 103).

[3] These statements should make it clear that although they had a specific European history of states in mind, they did not restrict their anti-statism merely to the modern European state, whether absolutist or bourgeois, as some mistakenly suggest (Parekh 1990).

of every one to nobody but himself' (Engels 1843, 503–504).[4] Similarly and in relation to England, Engels observes that monarchy, aristocracy and democracy arouse terror and horror, for the simple reason that the 'inhumanity of all forms of the state' is due to the fact that 'the state itself is the cause [*der Staat selbst die Ursache*] of all these inhumanities and is itself inhuman' (Engels 1844c, 570; 1844d, 492). The state, or at least hitherto existing forms of the state, was a culprit at many levels.[5]

Did this 'anti-statism' lead to calls for the abolition of the state as such, or—more concretely—of all particular types of state? The answer is—perhaps surprisingly—no. Instead, they restricted abolition to certain features of political and economic life that had begun to come to the fore with the ever-widening spread of a capitalist market economy. Thus, the resolute Proudhon urged above all the 'abolition [*l'abolition*] of the proprietary regime' (Proudhon 1840a, 194; 1840b, 187). Indeed, 'If you want to enjoy political equality, abolish [*abolissez*] property' (Proudhon 1840a, 34; 1840b, 32). Wilhelm Weitling was of a similar opinion, basing his position on the biblical Gospels. He spoke of the 'abolition [*Abschaffung*]' of private property, inheritance, money and all individual possessions (Weitling 1845a, 87–94, 125; 1838–1839, 20). These constituted the old rotten bonds of 'domination, tyranny and selfishness', which had to be 'smashed [*zertrümmert*]' (Weitling 1838,1839, 50).

Despite Weitling's stronger language, the overwhelming tendency was to frame even these terms within the Hegelian dialectic, which saturated much radical thought in Germany. Here the *negieren-aufheben* framework was a determining pattern, in which a specific item (private property was the most common) or even situation (the state) was negated (*negieren*), destroyed (*vernichten*) and even abolished (*abschaffen*), but only so that it could be sublated (*aufheben*) and transformed into a qualitatively distinct entity. Moses Hess is the most instructive here, not least because he worked closely with Engels and Marx in these early years. So let us consider his proposals in a little more detail.[6]

4.2.2 Moses Hess

To begin with the initial move: to 'negate' and 'negation' (*negieren* and *Negation*). For Hess, Proudhon 'negates [*negirte*] personal or private property in the sharpest way' (Hess 1843a, 84; 1843b, 108), and even his championing of an amorphous 'anarchy' meant the 'negation of all political domination, the negation of the concept of the state or politics [*die Negation jeder politischen Herrschaft, die Negation des Begriffes Staat oder Politik*]' (Hess 1843a, 77; 1843b, 101). Yet, Hess's primary usage of

[4] This is a paraphrase of *What is Property?*, for Proudhon actually writes 'Je suis anarchiste' (Proudhon 1840a, 212).

[5] We find even further variations: Fourier, in his spiritualised abstractness, spoke of 'civilisation' being trapped between a 'despotic state, barbarism, and a state of guaranteeism' (Fourier 1851, vol. 2, 440); for Comte, the evil was centralisation (Vernon 1984).

[6] For a somewhat useful survey of Hess's overall approach, see Kouvelakis (2003, 121–166). By contrast, Draper (1990, 115–116) is quite unhelpful.

negieren is in terms of what has already happened to the state, as capitalist modernity began to erode and destroy what had gone before. Thus, the previous century did 'negate [*negirte*]' the old state, although not the 'concept of the state as such [*Begriff des Staates überhaupt*]' (Hess 1843a, 76; 1843b, 100). Even so, this process of negation took place 'through its own dialectics', that is, it 'negates itself [*sich selber negiren*]' (Hess 1843a, 87, 89; 1843b, 111, 114; 1841, 116). The same may be said of his usage of *vernichten*, annihilate or destroy. For example, when speaking of the representative system of parliamentary democracy, he hopes that once people have power in their hands, it may eventually lead to a situation in which 'the state—the condition of conflict and strife—annihilates itself dialectically [*sich dialektische vernichtet*] and makes room for the one and united form of social life—that of a community' (Hess 1843a, 88; 1843b, 112).[7] Thus far *negieren* and *vernichten*, but what has happened to *abschaffen*, abolish? Here we need a small detour via another socialist of the time, Hermann Püttmann, who explains that *Abschaffung* is not a matter of 'command' but of 'creation [*Schaffung*]', by which he means that it entails an 'inner disintegration [*der inneren Zerfallenheit*]', so that the idols of commerce are 'annihilated [*vernichten*]' (Püttmann 1845, 185).[8]

By now we are ready for the all-important *aufheben* in Hess's writings. His overwhelming use of *aufheben* is of a transformation through communism. For example, communism would entail the *Aufhebung* of private property, inheritance, private enterprise and even historical rights, so as to be replaced by full human development, 'application of one's capacities', the 'democratic measures' of 'commonly owned industry', and the recovery of 'primordial equality' (Hess 1837a, 257; 1837b, 68; 1843a, 81, 86; 1843b, 105, 110; 1846a, 159; 1846b, 119; 1847a, 222; 1847b, 134). In short, such an *Aufhebung* would mean that everyone 'is offered and guaranteed by society the means necessary to live and act in a human way' (Hess 1846a, 159; 1846b, 119). So also would this *Aufhebung* apply to the state. It may be due to the course of world history, in which the old order is declining, or it may be brought about by a proletarian revolution, or—more properly—a confluence between the two, but the result would be a restoration of primordial equality and an 'eternal concord' between individuals and nations, so much so that the 'true life of the state' would 'begin when the historical right is *aufgehoben*' (Hess 1837a, 268, 278, 287; 1837b, 71, 74, 77; 1843a, 89; 1843b, 113).

Through Hess we have arrived at the question of the state itself. Like others, he proposed not the *Abschaffung* of the state in a future communist society, but transformation into alternative structures.[9] For example, Weitling (1845a, 134; 1845b, 124) was quite clear that the principles propounded by Jesus Christ in the Gospels

[7] Even so, in the new society the tribes, nationalities and races will 'not be annihilated [*nicht vernichtet*]', but be able to construct a new and large family (Hess 1841, 156).

[8] A native of Elberfeld (like Engels), Püttmann would eventually emigrate in 1854 to Melbourne, Australia, where he distinguished himself as a local publisher until his death in 1874.

[9] Thus, those who assert that the idea of 'abolishing' the state was widespread at the time do so without having studied the actual material (Draper 1970, 283). The introduction to MEGA I.3 (p. 52) makes a similar assertion.

would require a 'Christian-communist state', while Fourier (1851) sought a 'societary state' that entailed a harmonious state of the passions. Even the supposed father of Anarchism, Proudhon, began to see the need for forms of governance. He may have written of the '*dissolution*' of the government within the economic organism and of a 'society without authority' (Proudhon 1851, 253–304), of '*an-archie*' as opposed to monarchy and (church) hierarchy, without master and sovereign, a negation '*de toute autorité*' (Proudhon 1849, 93; 1840a, 216), but he also realised the necessity of governance in the new society. Thus, he repeatedly points out that society 'searches for order within anarchy [*cherche l'ordre dans l'anarchie*]', that order comes out of anarchy, so much so that it is the 'true form of governance' (Proudhon 1849, 43, 68; 1840a, 216). As to its form, he equivocated. On the one hand, he spoke of a form of 'centralisation analogous to that of the state', but in which no one must obey or be dependent (Proudhon 1848, 69–70). On the other hand, in a late piece he proposed a decentralised form of 'federal government', which would balance authority by his cherished liberty. Anarchy would then mean government of each by each, or simply 'self-government' (Proudhon 1863, 11, 14–17).

4.2.3 Max Stirner

Thus far, I have deliberately not discussed Max Stirner. Why? On the matter of the abolition of the state, he is the exception to the material I have analysed. Stirner began from a point common to the others, criticising all forms of the state hitherto known: 'Every state is a *despotism*, be the despot one or many' (Stirner 1845a, 200; 1845b, 175). Basing his position on the resolute opposition between state and individual, he asserted that the state 'always has the sole purpose to limit, tame, subordinate the individual' (Stirner 1845a, 231; 1845b, 201), which leads to: 'we two, the State and I, are enemies' (Stirner 1845a, 183; 1845b, 161). Can the state and people be improved, reformed or even transformed? On this question, he differed sharply from the others. The answer was a resounding 'no': people and state can only 'be sublated [*aufheben*], annihilated [*vernichten*], abolished [*abschaffen*], not reformed' (Stirner 1845a, 240).[10] Earlier, we saw how the terminology of *vernichten* and even *abschaffen* was drawn into a Hegelian framework of *negieren* and *aufheben*. Stirner effects a reversal: all are drawn towards *abschaffen*, abolish. It should be no surprise that Stirner became the touchstone for the later anarchist slogan of *Abschaffung des Staates*.

Even at this earlier stage, Stirner's resolute position had a curious effect on other socialists when they found themselves engaging with his thought. We may distinguish two effects: first, when they broached the topic of the state's abolition, they

[10] Translation mine. Elsewhere, he uses '*selbst erlöschen*' (Stirner 1845a, 292). One or two others seemed to have followed Stirner's lead in the late 1840s. For example, Eduard von Müller-Tellering wrote to Marx in 1849 that all peoples should stand together and 'annihilate [*vernichten*] the old society [*Gesellschaft*] to the last extremity' (Mülle-Tellering 1849, 146). This is an exception rather than the rule.

almost always did so while engaging with Stirner; second, even when they appropriated some of Stirner's terminology, they tried—in contrast to Stirner—to steer it towards the Hegelian framework of *Aufhebung*. We will see this process take place with Engels (and Marx), but let me give here the example of Moses Hess. When noting Stirner's own position, Hess is clear: 'He incessantly wants to annihilate [*vernichten*] the "state"' (Hess 1845a, 204).[11] But when Hess responds, even if his language is influenced in some way by that of Stirner, he consistently seeks to draw the whole discussion back into the Hegelian orbit. The most notable moment appears in his communist catechism: 'Is it necessary to abolish [*abzuschaffen*] the current property—money—through a decree?' The reply is no, for a gradual transformation is preferred. Indeed, 'violent [*gewaltsame*] and sudden *Aufhebung* of the current property relations would bear bad fruit' (Hess 1846a, 164; 1846b, 123).[12] This point is fascinating in its expression: instead of a violent and sudden *Abschaffung*, he reasserts his Hegelian framework by insisting that a sudden *Aufhebung* would be highly undesirable; far better to 'transform gradually [*allmählich umgestalten]*'.

The outcome of this assessment of early socialists, particularly those close to Engels and Marx, is that they may have voiced opposition to all forms of hitherto existing states, and they may have expressed the desire to abolish some features of a capitalist market economy (private property is the most notable), but when they came to the state as such, they preferred to speak of its transformation into a very different structure. For the German radicals influenced by Hegel, this was an *Aufhebung* that would usher in a qualitatively new form of governance. Even Proudhon, the fabled 'father' of the later Anarchism, saw the need for some type of governance. In all this, the notable exception was Stirner and his resolute call for the *Abschaffung* of the state. With this context in mind, I now turn to analyse in some detail the development of Engels's thought on this question. We will find that it was not until 1850 that he clearly used the term, for the specific purpose of delineating a communist position. His language may be drawn from the slogans of others, language that would subsequently be clarified, but the point is clear.

4.3 Engels: Towards 1850

In the period before 1850, Engels—like other young radicals of the time—spoke of the *Abschaffung* of private property and increasingly of the *Aufhebung* entailed in the communist transformation. But he rarely, if ever, spoke of the *Abschaffung, Vernichtung* or *Aufhebung* of the current state in light of communism. Why these three terms? They appeared in the influential text by Stirner cited above: the state

[11] See also the observation in a letter to Marx in 1845, that Stirner 'despises [*verachten*]' the state, although it is an ideal of the state, and that he seeks to 'annihilate [*vernichten*]' bourgeois society (Hess 1845b, 450).

[12] It may also be possible to read in a similar way his expression, 'total abolition [*gänzliche Aufhebung*]' of inheritance' (Hess 1847a, 220; 1847b, 132).

can only 'be sublated [*aufheben*], annihilated [*vernichten*], abolished [*abschaffen*], not reformed' (Stirner 1845a, 240). To be sure, Engels used these terms on many occasions, but not in relation to the state. In order to gain a comprehensive sense of this wider usage, I initially undertook an examination of all usages in Engels's texts up to 1850. Given the detail (perhaps tedious for some), I have relegated this material to an externally located appendix. The conclusions may be summarised as follows.

Abschaffung is used primarily for two purposes: to speak of the *Abschaffung* of feudalism and its various relics by an emerging capitalist market economy; to designate the acts of existing states in repealing laws, such as the Corn Law, taxes, tolls and so forth. *Vernichtung* too is not used in referring to the state after a communist revolution, and Engels uses it rarely in relation to private property—a major concern among the young radicals of the 1840s. Instead, the main usage of *Vernichtung* concerns two dimensions of a capitalist market economy and its struggles: the destructive effects of capitalism itself and the disastrous effects of counter-revolution, especially after the failed 1848 revolution across Europe. *Aufhebung* has the widest semantic field of the three terms, covering a simpler annulment or repeal (especially of laws), through abolition (closer to *Abschaffung*) and dissolution (here it is close to *Auflösung*), to the preferred Hegelian sense of negation and transformation, if not transcendence, for which the closest English term—derived from Latin—is sublation. In this sense, *Aufhebung* is applied to the internal tensions of a capitalist market economy, private property, and in the qualitative shift to communism. We may assess this varied usage in two ways: to begin with, *Aufhebung* may be used in different senses depending on the context, with a particular aspect of its semantic field deployed for a specific purpose; to go a step further, the word also invokes its wider semantic field, which in Engels's (and Marx's) usage tends to be saturated by the dialectical sense inherited from Hegel. Obviously, these two ways of seeing the usage of *Aufhebung* are not mutually exclusive, but the striking result of my research is that the word is rarely used for the state as such.

These conclusions relate to the wider patterns of the usage of *Abschaffung, Vernichtung* and *Aufhebung*. However, there are five more concentrated texts that deal with private property, the potential outcome of communism, and Stirner's proposed *Abschaffung* of the state. These texts require more detailed analysis.

4.3.1 The Delay in Abolishing Private Property

Two of the texts concern private property, one in relation to Proudhon in *The Holy Family* and the other being Engels's comprehensive draft for the Communist Manifesto, the 'Principles of Communism'. While the former is thoroughly dialectical, deploying Hegelian patterns of thought (albeit with a constant materialist move), the latter is more forthright in speaking primarily of the *Abschaffung* of private property.

In more detail, the relevant section of *The Holy Family* engages with Proudhon through a criticism of Edgar Bauer's reading of Proudhon (Marx and Engels 1845a, 24–54; 1845b, 24–51). My interest is not in the criticism but in how Engels and Marx

are keen—at this point in the development of their thought—to determine Proudhon's distinct insights (later, they would see the limitations of Proudhon's approach, especially in Marx's 'The Poverty of Philosophy'). These insights turn on the observation that Proudhon undertakes the first rigorous and scientific investigation of the 'basis of political economy [*Nationalökonomie*], *private property*' (Marx and Engels 1845a, 33; 1845b, 32). On this basis, Proudhon shows how the movement of property and thus of capital produces poverty, so that he 'sublates *[aufhebt]* property in order to sublate [*aufzuheben*] poverty' (Marx and Engels 1845a, 36; 1845b, 35). The next step is to substitute the proletariat for poverty and the property owner for property, leading to a version of the master–slave dialectic and the beginnings of a class analysis. Here we find a full panoply of Hegelian terminology: mutual 'self-estrangement [*Selbstentfremdung*]', through which the property owner feels power, while in the proletarian's 'powerlessness [*Ohnmacht*]' and 'abasement [*Verworfenheit*]' arises the need for the 'negation of that nature [*Verneinung dieser Natur*]'. Or rather, the proletariat embodies the need not to preserve the antithesis but to undertake the action of its *Vernichtung* (Marx and Engels 1845a, 36–38; 1845b, 35–37). In sum:

> The proletariat, on the contrary, is compelled as proletariat to sublate itself *[aufzuheben]* and thereby its opposite, private property, which determines its existence, and which makes it proletariat. It is the negative side of the antithesis, its restlessness within its very self, dissolved and self-dissolving private property [*das aufgelöste und sich auflösende Privateigentum*] (Marx and Engels 1845a, 37; 1845b, 36).

The dialectic makes another twist with the next insight, that private property—as both institution and principle—is actually impossible. Since it is the existence of 'alienated *[entäußerten]*, self-contradicting [*selbst widersprechenden*], self-estranged [*selbst entfremdeten*] equality' it of necessity 'contradicts itself and sublates itself [*sich selbst … aufhebt*]'. While this highly Hegelian terminology would later become the more materialist category of objective conditions, already here we find the insistence that Proudhon speaks of a 'real [*wirkliche*] *Aufhebung* of this estrangement' (Marx and Engels 1845a, 42–43; 1845b, 41–42). In other words, unlike the Young Hegelian tendency to restrict such an *Aufhebung* to the realm of ideas and categories, Proudhon seeks far more: 'to *aufheben* the practically estranged relation of man to his *objective essence* and the *political-economic* expression of human self-estrangement' (Marx and Engels 1845a, 44; 1845b, 42).[13]

Obviously, the whole framework of the argument is distinctly Hegelian, albeit with consistent efforts to ground it on a materialist register insofar as they understood it at the time. At this point, it is clear that Proudhon's influence entailed a focus on private property as the key to the whole system, although we do not find a reference to the state. The next text—which also deals primarily with private property—is Engels's 1847 catechism, 'Principles of Communism'. It is modelled on the genre of Christian

[13] See also: 'They know that property, capital, money, wage-labour and the like are no ideal figments of the brain but very practical, very objective products of their self-estrangement and that therefore they must be sublated [*aufgehoben werden*] in a practical, objective way for man to become man not only in *thinking,* in *consciousness,* but in mass *being,* in life'(Marx and Engels 1845a, 55–56; 1845b, 53).

catechisms, although Engels was not the only one who wrote them at the time in an effort to state clearly and teach others the principles of the communist cause (see Hess's catechism discussed earlier).[14] In comparison with the treatment of Proudhon in *The Holy Family*, the Hegelian tone has become significantly muted, although private property remains the focus. Further, although he occasionally speaks of the *Aufhebung* of private property, Engels's preferred usage is its *Abschaffung*.[15]

The most intriguing development already at this early stage concerns a necessary delay. On the one hand, Engels is still committed to the position that the *Abschaffung* of private property is both the 'most succinct and characteristic summary of the transformation of the entire social system' proposed by the Communists (Engels 1847b, 371; 1847c, 348) and the basis for what would later be called the liberation of the forces of production and thus of society as a whole. As he summarises at the end of the long answer to question 20:

> The general association of all members of society for the common and planned exploitation of the productive forces, the expansion of production to a degree where it will satisfy the needs of all, the termination [*Aufhören*] of the condition where the needs of some are satisfied at the expense of others, the complete *Vernichtung* of classes and their antagonisms, the all-round development of the abilities of all the members of society through the elimination [*Beseitigung*] of the hitherto existing division of labour, through industrial education, through change of activity, through the participation of all in the enjoyments provided by all, through the merging of town and country – such are the main results of the *Abschaffung* of private property (Engels 1847b, 377; 1847c, 354).[16]

On the other hand, such an abolition is not immediately possible even after a revolution. Question 17 asks, 'Will it be possible to abolish [*Abschaffung*] private property at one stroke [*mit einem Schlage*]?' The answer:

> No, such a thing would be just as impossible as at *one* stroke to increase the existing productive forces to the degree necessary for instituting community of property. Hence, the proletarian revolution, which in all probability is impending, will transform existing society only gradually [*nur allmählich*], and be able to abolish [*abschaffen*] private property only when the necessary quantity of the means of production has been created (Engels 1847b, 372; 1847c, 350).

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[14] An earlier draft of the 'Principles', called 'Entwurf eines Kommunistischen Glaubensbekenntnis', or in English, 'Draft of a Communist Confession of Faith' (Engels 1847a), is planned to appear in MEGA I.6, but thus far has appeared only in a 1969 collection (Andréas 1969). This earlier catechism is much closer to that of Hess. Compare, however, an even more concise form in a letter from Engels in 1846: '(1) to ensure that the interests of the proletariat prevail, as opposed to those of the bourgeoisie; (2) to do so by the *Aufhebung* of private property and replacing same with community of goods; (3) to recognise no means of attaining these aims other than democratic, violent [*gewaltsame*] revolution' (Engels 1846a, 54; 1846b, 82).

[15] We also find a reasonably consistent use of *Vernichtung*, with reference to the effect of capitalist exchange and bourgeois society on the aristocracy and feudal social relations, of the annihilation of economic misery under the communist organisation of the economy, of classes and their opposition, and of the existing basis of marriage in private property (Engels 1847b, 368, 370, 377, 378; 1847c, 346, 348, 354, 355).

[16] Note here the stylistic variation, with *Aufhören* (termination) and *Beseitigung* (elimination). Elsewhere in the same piece, Engels speaks of the 'Communists' aim to overthrow [*stürzen*]' current bourgeois society and its capitalist system' (Engels 1847b, 378, 379; 1847b, 355, 356).

This point is repeated in a number of different ways, whether in terms of such an abolition 'following from the development of industry', as a 'final elimination [*schließlichen Beseitigung*]', or in terms of a series of proposed developments after a proletarian revolution (Engels 1847b, 371, 373–374, 375; 1847c, 348, 350–351, 352). While Engels speaks nowhere in the catechism of the state, this necessary delay for even the abolition of private property has ramifications for the development of his (and Marx's) later position on the state. Let me put it this way: as with *The Holy Family*, Engels is still clearly enamoured with and influenced by Proudhon's focus on private property, seeing it as a distinct summary of the communist position and a basis for the development of industry and society after a proletarian revolution. Yet, by 1847 he has also taken a significant step beyond both Proudhon and the position found in *The Holy Family*. The abolition of private property would certainly not take place at one stroke or even immediately; instead, it requires a distinct development after a proletarian revolution before it could become a possibility. As we will see, the dying away of the state would need an even longer process.

4.3.2 The Communist Aufhebung

The next two texts to be considered concern the somewhat abstract formulations of what a communist society might be: sections from *The German Ideology* and 'The Manifesto of the Communist Party'. In the former, which was written over 1845 and 1846,[17] we still find private property as a crucial feature, but already the communist project includes much more. Two points need to be stressed at this point: the delay in abolishing private property, and the preference for the terminology of *Aufhebung* for what communism might entail.

In more detail: one can find many of the topics dealt with above, especially in terms of the central role of private property. For example, communism entails the '*Aufhebung der Basis, des Privateigentums*', so much so that communism is 'identical' with the *Aufhebung* of private property (Marx and Engels 1845–1846a, 35, 37; 1845–1846b, 48, 51).[18] However, private property cannot simply be abolished. Later in the same manuscript, Engels and Marx observe that such an *Aufhebung* can take place only 'on condition of an all-round development of individuals'. Why? The 'existing form of intercourse [*Verkehr*] and the existing productive forces [*Produktivkräfte*] are all-embracing and only individuals that are developing in an all-round

[17] The manuscripts were edited and published initially in 1932, with relatively unedited manuscripts appearing almost 80 years later (Marx and Engels 1845–1846d). Although there is a 1970 edition in MEGA I.5, I have cited the MEW version in what follows, since it does not affect my exegesis.

[18] I leave aside the passages where the theoretical and abstract formulations of the Young Hegelians are contrasted with realities addressed by the communist cause (Marx and Engels 1845–1846a, 350, 456–457, 500–501; 1845–1846b, 367, 469–470, 511–512). It is also intriguing to note an early observation in a letter from Marx to Arnold Rüge, where he compares different communist doctrines and observes that the *Aufhebung* of private property and communism are 'by no means identical [*keineswegs identisch*]', since communism has other socialist doctrines (Marx 1843, 55).

fashion can appropriate them'—that is, transform them into 'free manifestations of their lives' (Marx and Engels 1845–1846a, 424; 1845–1846b, 439). The reality of a necessary delay in the *Aufhebung* of private property may not be spelled out as clearly as in Engels's catechism a couple of years later, but it is here nonetheless: certain conditions need to be fulfilled before it becomes possible.

Already we have moved to the second key insight in *The German Ideology*: communism entails much more than a focus on private property. The passage from which I have just quoted is part of a longer analysis with a series of dialectical turns, all of which seek to show how the internal contradictions of a capitalist system lead to its *Aufhebung*. While the dialectical turns themselves are not of direct interest to my argument, the fact that each turn includes yet another item in the communist project is of interest: division of labour appears first, with its necessary consequence of classes; 'intercourse [*Verkehr*]' and productive forces are next, with private property now appearing alongside the division of labour; and throughout the passage runs the early formulation of the 'association of individuals [*die Vereinigung der Individuen*]' (Marx and Engels 1845–1846a, 424; 1845–1846b, 439). Of these, private property, division of labour and classes will undergo the process of *Aufhebung*, which will happen through the further development of the forces of production. Other parts of *The German Ideology* make similar points, whether in terms of the individual and class identity of the bourgeoisie in light of private property[19] (Marx and Engels 1845–1846a, 210–211); or the 'self-sublating [*selbst aufhebt*]'[20] of all class rule and thus of classes themselves, since the communist revolution is carried out by the 'class which no longer counts as a class in society' (Marx and Engels 1845–1846a, 54, 69–70; 1845–1846b, 77, 52–53); all of which may be summed up by the observation that communism is not so much as ideal to which realty must adjust, but the 'real movement which sublates the present state of things [*jetzigen Zustand aufhebt*]' (Marx and Engels 1845–1846a, 35; 1845–1846b, 49).

Throughout all these points, Engels and Marx consistently use *Aufhebung* and its verbal form, *aufheben*, with occasional uses of *Auflösung*. The framework is clearly still Hegelian, which draws these formulations closer to *The Holy Family* than the catechism I have already considered. Even more noticeable is a sustained absence of any mention of the state, except for the following: 'the communist revolution, which sublates [*aufhebt*] the division of labour, ultimately eliminates [*beseitigt*] political institutions' (Marx and Engels 1845–1846a, 364; 1845–1846b, 380). To qualify: the closest they come to the state is the phrase 'political institutions [*politischen Einrichtungen*]'; this is not, strictly speaking, the state.[21] Once again, the issue of delay appears with the 'ultimately' or 'in the end [*schließlich*]', which has now moved beyond private property and relates to political institutions. Unfortunately, the observation is exceedingly cryptic. Further, this observation relates to the material

[19] This section echoes the master–slave dialectic, derived from Hegel and appearing also in *The Holy Family* (see above).

[20] In this text, Engels and Marx also speak of the proletariat as the expression of 'the dissolution [*Auflösung*] of all classes, nationalities, etc., within present society'.

[21] Contra Draper (1970, 284–285).

concerning communism, where Engels and Marx began to outline—still in rather abstract and dialectical terms—what a communist revolution might be. They will of course engage directly with the state when they come to Max Stirner. Yet, before I analyse that material, I would like to consider the Communist Manifesto of a few years later.

The relevant section of the Communist Manifesto (Marx and Engels 1848a, 474–481; 1848b, 497–504) deals with a series of bourgeois objections to communism, the first of which concerns—not unexpectedly—private property. The bourgeois objection: Communists seek the *Abschaffung* of the fruit of one's labour, which is acquired personally and is the basis of freedom and independence. The answer: in no way do Communists advocate 'abolishing [*abschaffen*]' the 'personal appropriation of the products of labour' (1848a, 476; 1848b, 499); communism deprives no-one of 'the power to appropriate the products of society [*gesellschaftliche Produkte*]' (1848a, 477; 1848b, 500). After all, in the current situation workers have previous little, with barely enough for subsistence and leaving no surplus.

Instead, the target is bourgeois property (*das bürgerliche Privateigentum*). Engels and Marx are quite clear as to what they mean: on the one hand, it is the personal property of the bourgeoisie, which is regarded as the basis of bourgeois individuality, independence and freedom. The catch is that the bourgeoisie comprises only one-tenth of the population and yet holds nearly all property. Nine-tenths have virtually nothing at all, so that the private property as promoted by bourgeois ideologues is meaningless for the vast majority. On the other hand, the property held by the bourgeoisie already has a social character, as capital. Thus, the *Abschaffung* of bourgeois property means not a conversion from personal property to social property, but the transformation (*verwandeln*) of its social character.

Hence: 'In this sense, the theory of the Communists may be summed up in one phrase: *Aufhebung* of private property' (Marx and Engels 1848a, 475). By now, the qualifier—'In this sense [*Im diesen Sinn*]'—should be clear, distinguishing the specific aim of the Communists from other socialist movements that also proclaimed the *Abschaffung* of existing 'property relations [*bisheriger Eigentumsverhältnisse*]'. But I would like to stress a linguistic point. The section of the text I am exegeting uses *Abschaffung*, *Aufhebung* and occasionally *Verwandlung* (and their verbal forms). An initial reading may give the impression that the terms are interchangeable, offering stylistic variations on the same point.[22]

A more careful reading suggests another possibility. In the few paragraphs leading up to the summary sentence mentioned above—'*Aufhebung* of private property'—the

[22] One may also mention here the occasional uses of *nehmen* (*nimmt*), take away or deprive, *Aufhören*, stop or cease, *Verlust*, loss, *wegfallen*, be discontinued, *verschwinden*, disappear or vanish, *fallen*, fall (away), *sich ändern*, change, *Auflösung*, dissolution, and *verwandeln*, convert or transform.

text uniformly uses *Abschaffung*.[23] Afterwards, and for some pages, it overwhelmingly use *Aufhebung*.[24] Is this a stylistic accident? Perhaps, but it may also indicate the more comprehensive sense that a communist revolution and the effort to construct socialism involves less of an intentional and simple *Abschaffung* and more of a qualitative transformation. This preference is particularly noticeable with key sentences that embrace the whole situation: '*die Aufhebung dieses Verhältnisses*'; '*Aufhebung der jetzigen Produktionsverhältnisse*'; and '*die Exploitation des einen Individuums durch das andere aufgehoben wird*' (Marx and Engels 1848a, 476, 478, 479). Further, this preferred usage becomes ever more pronounced as more and more items are added to the communist program (by means of responding to bourgeois objections): wage-labour, individuality and freedom, culture, family, education, women, countries and nationalities, religion, morality, philosophy, political science and law. In other words, the comprehensive and qualitative transformation brought about by a proletarian revolution and the effort to construct socialism are better captured with *Aufhebung*.

Yet, throughout this section of the Communist Manifesto, the state itself is noticeably absent—except for a slight appearance in the famous sketch of what the period after a proletarian revolution might look like. Not only do we find the twin moves of centralisation and the exercise of socialist *Gewalt* (Boer 2019), which would later come to be called the dictatorship of the proletariat (Marx and Engels 1850a, 354; 1850b, 387), but also two important usages of *aufheben*:

> If the proletariat during its contest with the bourgeoisie is compelled, by the force of circumstances, to organise itself as a class, if, by means of a revolution, it makes itself the ruling class, and, as such, sublates by violent force the old conditions of production [*gewaltsam die alten Produktionsverhältnisse aufhebt*], then it will, along with these conditions, have sublated [*hebt … auf*] the conditions for the existence of class antagonisms and of classes generally, and thereby its own supremacy as a class (Marx and Engels 1848a, 482; 1848b, 505–506).

Again, the state is not mentioned explicitly, for the focus is on class antagonisms and conflict, which the proletariat must use for its program as the new *herrschende Klasse*. Keeping in mind the material analysed in the previous two chapters, we can see the necessary conditions for the state in such a focus. More importantly, although *aufheben* appears in the text twice, it relates to four clauses: the transformation or sublation by violent force (*gewaltsam*) of the old conditions of production; the *Aufhebung* of the conditions for class antagonisms; the *Aufhebung* of classes in general; and the *Aufhebung* of the proletariat's rule as a class (*Herrschaft als Klasse*). I hardly need to point out that the connection between *aufheben* and *gewaltsam* indicates that the qualitative transformation entailed in the process of constructing socialism is not necessarily gentle.

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[23] Although see the later criticism of bourgeois socialism, which eschews revolution and the *Abschaffung* of bourgeois relations of production (Marx and Engels 1848a, 489; 1848b, 514).

[24] The few exceptions concern bourgeois charges against Communists, in relation to the family, countries and nations, and the threefold slogan of truth, religion and morality (Marx and Engels 1848a, 478, 479, 480; 1848b, 501, 502, 504), as well as one usage concerning bourgeois property (Marx and Engels 1848a, 477; 1848b, 501).

Let us pause for a moment to recap the findings of texts analysed thus far: first, there is a move from the centrality of private property (due to Proudhon's influence) to a much wider sense of what the communist program should be; already in the 1840s, an awareness of delay begins to appear, although it is focused on the 'abolition' of private property; the terminology of *Abschaffung* and *Aufhebung* is at times more interchangeable, and at times—especially in the Communist Manifesto—more clearly demarcated; what one does with the state after a proletarian revolution is virtually absent in the texts considered thus far.

4.3.3 Max Stirner's Willpower

Yet, the 'abolition' of the state does appear in one concentrated moment: when Engels and Marx engage directly with Max Stirner in *The German Ideology*—who is the prime focus of this collection of manuscripts. As was the case with Moses Hess (see above), it was Stirner's rambling work that prompted Engels and Marx to deal directly with this question. Thus far, I have returned on a few occasions to a key sentence from Stirner: the state can only 'be sublated [*aufheben*], annihilated [*vernichten*], abolished [*abschaffen*], not reformed' (Stirner 1845a, 240). Of the many collective entities and programs targeted in Stirner's *Der Einzige und Sein Eigentum*, the state is distinctly obnoxious. In whatever form, the state entails despotism, slavery, systematised violence (as 'law'), and the obliteration of the private individual (1845a, 200–201, 231–234; 1845b, 175–176, 201–204). It has become, especially in its modern European form where religion has increasingly been banished, a 'mundane God [*weltlichen Gotte*]' with its own rituals, worship and cult (1845a, 103; 1845b, 91). In short, the 'state and I, are enemies [*Feinde*]' (1845a, 183; 1845b, 161).[25] It should be no surprise that Stirner calls for its *Abschaffung* (Stirner 1845a, 122, 199, 240; 1845b, 107, 174–175, 209).

How do Engels and Marx respond? On three occasions they address Stirner's objections to communism, even if such a 'communism' is more Stirner's own construction than the reality of the nascent communist movement. Each criticism focuses on the logical inconsistencies in Stirner's proposals. The first concerns private property: Stirner observes that although the Communists seek to 'take away [*wegnehmen*]' private property, they cannot do away with the 'own-ness [*Eigenheit*]'[26] embodied in opinions that one possesses. Do the Communists wish the *Aufhebung* of this too? (Stirner 1845a, 132; 1845b, 115).[27] This objection requires little effort to refute, for it is—for Engels and Marx—a standard bourgeois move, in which

[25] See also: 'Frei aber bin *Ich* in *keinem* Staate' (Stirner 1845a, 231; 1845b, 201).

[26] A literal translation of *Eigenheit* to bring out the word-play, although it may also be translated as 'individual peculiarity'.

[27] The letter from Engels to Marx of 19 November, 1844, mentions Stirner at length (whom Engels had just read), but mentions only the *Abschaffung* of private property (Engels 1844e, 255; 1844f, 13).

the objective reality of private property functions as the defining feature of bourgeois identity. Even more, it entails a verbal play and a logical fallacy to connect '*Mein* [mine]' and '*Meinung* [opinion]', '*Eigentum* [property]' and '*Eigenheit* [own-ness]' (Marx and Engels 1845–1846a, 210; 1845–1846b, 229).[28] The fallacy is to connect the reality with the concept and to make the latter primary; by contrast, the concept arises from the reality of private property. As the example given indicates: would Stirner regard '"having" a stomach-ache [*er Leibschmerzen "habe"*]', so much so that it will be his 'own [*eigen*]' to him, in a communist society as a continuation of private property? (Marx and Engels 1845–1846a, 211; 1845–1846b, 229).

When we come to the actual *Abschaffung des Staates*, once again Stirner objects to the Communists, seeking to distinguish his own position from them. Engels and Marx quote loosely as follows: '*Weil die Arbeiter sich im Notstand befinden, so muß der gegenwärtige Stand der Dinge, d.i. der Staat (status = Stand) abgeschafft werden*' (Marx and Engels, 1845,1846a, 193).[29] Intriguingly, Engels and Marx do not seek to clarify how the communist position differs from that proposed by Stirner, but rather to show how Stirner once again engages in wordplay and logical nonsense. As they put it, Stirner attempts to construct the communist '*Abschaffung* of the state' by means of a series of appositions:

> the state of distress [*Notstand*] = the existing *Stand* of things
>
> the existing *Stand* of affairs = *Stand*
>
> *Stand* = *status*
>
> *status* = the State [*Staat*]
>
> Conclusion: *Notstand* = the State [*Staat*]
>
> (Marx and Engels 1845–1846a, 193; 1845–1846b, 212).

The wordplay turns on senses of *Stand*, a term almost impossible to translate. Within its semantic field, it includes a standing position, one's standing, a state or conditions (of affairs, finances, and so on), status, and estate in the medieval sense.

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[28] The German of Stirner's text reads: 'Indem die Sozialisten auch das Eigentum wegnehmen, beachten sie nicht, daß dieses sich in der Eigenheit eine Fortdauer sichert. Ist denn bloß Geld und Gut ein Eigentum, oder ist jede Meinung ein Mein, ein Eigenes? Es muß also jede Meinung aufgehoben oder unpersönlich gemacht werden' (Stirner 1845a, 132).

[29] An English translation struggles to capture the wordplay: 'Since the workers are in a *state of distress,* the existing *state of affairs,* i.e., the *state (status* = (e)state) must be abolished'. Here, *The German Ideology* condenses the text by turning the majority who are at a disadvantage (*die Mehrzahl gegen die Minderzahl im Nachteil*) into '*Weil die Arbeiter*'. The German of Stirner's text reads: 'Die Reflexionen und Schlüsse des Kommunismus sehen sehr einfach aus. Wie die Sachen dermalen liegen, also unter den jetzigen Staatsverhältnissen, stehen die Einen gegen die Andern, und zwar die Mehrzahl gegen die Minderzahl im Nachteil. Bei diesem Stande der Dinge befinden sich jene im Wohlstande, diese im Notstande. Daher muß der gegenwärtige Stand der Dinge, d. i. der Staat (status = Stand) abgeschafft werden' (Stirner 1845a, 122). In English: 'The reflections and conclusions of communism look very simple. As matters lie at this time, in the present situation with regard to the state, therefore, some, and they the majority, are at a disadvantage compared to others, the minority. In this *state* of things the former are in a *state of prosperity*, the latter in a *state of need*. Hence the present *state* of things, the state itself, must be done away with' (Stirner 1845b, 107).

Stirner appositions move through quite a number of these senses, from state of distress and affairs, through estate, status (group) and the state itself. In response, Engels and Marx point out the distorting simplification of such a schema, which reduces very different situations—whether England in 1688, France in 1789, Prussia or North America—to the simple conclusion: 'wherever a "state of distress [*Notstand*]" exists, "the State [*Staat*]" … must be abolished [*abgeschafft werden muß*]' (1845–1846a, 193; 1845–1846b, 213).

The third instance tackles Stirner's proposals directly, where we begin to see profound misgivings concerning his approach to the abolition of the state. In a section that begins with the question of 'right' and then moves to identify the central role of the 'will [*Wille*]', the crucial point is that Stirner believes that individual will has sufficient power to abolish law and thus the state. Not only is this approach 'purely destructive as regards state and law [*rein vernichtend gegen den Staat und das Gesetz*]', but it turns on 'a great trick [*große Kunststück*]' by which the 'state is destroyed [*vernichtet*] by a mere change of will [*eine bloße Veränderung des Willens*]' (1845–1846a, 317; 1845–1846b, 335). Obviously, this act of pure will by an individual is hardly enough to bring about the much-proclaimed *Abschaffung* of the state. The implications of this criticism would come to fruition with Bakunin's fiasco in Lyons some years later (see more below). As is their wont in this text, Engels and Marx proceed with a series of logical oppositions to reveal that this reliance on pure will is thoroughly arbitrary. Against the might of the state's alien will, Stirner advocates the *Herrschaft* of his own will, which turns out to be nothing more than the 'domination of arbitrariness [*Herrschaft der Willkür*]' (1845–1846a, 317; 1845–1846b, 335). Here, Engels and Marx turn the wordplay against Stirner: *Wille* has an etymological connection with *Willkür*. The individual's will is nothing more than pure arbitrariness.

This relatively brief criticism would have profound implications for the eventual clarification of the differences between anarchist and communist approaches to revolution and particularly the state. As we have seen through this rather detailed analysis of material up to 1850, the slogan of the 'abolition of the state' was primarily due to Stirner's work. When various Communists, such as Hess, Engels and Marx, did deal with such an abolition, they did so in response to Stirner. Otherwise, they dealt with specific items, particularly private property (under Proudhon's influence). And for Engels and Marx, the proposed abolition of the state was profoundly unviable. For Stirner, it boils down to nothing more than an arbitrary act of individual will. This would not do for a communist project, concerning which two features have emerged: communism entails much more than concerns over private property; and even with private property, the awareness of a delay, until the fuller conditions of socialist construction have developed, begins to emerge. This necessary delay would become even more important in relation to the state.

4.3.4 *'On the Slogan of the Abolition of the State'*

We have reached the point where the *Abschaffung* of the state, or even its *Aufhebung* or *Vernichtung*, were not common slogans at all among the German Communists of the 1840s—Engels and Marx included.[30] They did from time to time speak of private property, inheritance and even class conflict, but not of the state as such.[31] The exception was when they found themselves engaging with Stirner, who advocated precisely such an abolition in the name of a radical 'species of self-mastery or individual autonomy' (Leopold 2006, 184).[32] The turning point comes in 1850 with the unfinished essay, 'On the Slogan of the Abolition of the State and the German "Friends of Anarchy"' (Engels 1850c,1850d). Crucially, the key term is '*Abschaffung des Staats*', which Engels uses on five occasions.[33] None of the other terms analysed above appear.[34] Further, Engels points out that '*Abschaffung* of the state' had rather suddenly become a catch-cry of a range of self-described radical currents. What they meant by the slogan was another matter: the *Abschaffung* of feudalism, the liberal idea of the small state (as in North America) with the sense that the sacrosanct individual reigned supreme, the priority and indeed continuation of *bürgerliche Gesellschaft* … in short, it had become a bourgeois slogan that actually meant

[30] If so, how do we assess Engels's claim in an 1871 letter to Carlo Cafiero, a young Italian radical who was being drawn into Anarchism: 'the "abolition of the state" is an old German philosophical phrase, of which we made much use when we were tender youths' (Engels 1871a, 163). This observation appears in the context of pointing out the faults of Bakunin's sectarian activities (Engels 1871a, 162–164), referring with relish to the Lyons fiasco of 1870, when Bakunin infamously declared that the state was abolished, only to be arrested by the local police and bundled out of town (see more below). There is one problem: the letter was originally written in English, which was subsequently rendered into Italian by a police translator (after Cafiero was arrested and his correspondence confiscated). While we have the Italian '*abolizione*' (Marx and Engels 1964, 21), the original English has not been found (the rendering in MECW is a back-translation). Thus, we simply do not know what 'old German philosophical phrase' Engels had in mind, nor indeed what 'tender youths' might mean. Perhaps Engels was referring with some embarrassment to his isolated flourish in response to Proudhon (see above). Or was Engels deploying a tactic to indicate to Cafiero that one may entertain quasi-anarchist ideas in one's youth, but one soon grows up? On Cafiero and his initial closeness to Marx and Engels, his turn to anarchism and then later return to Marxism, see Drake (2003, 29–55).

[31] Lefebvre's curious effort (2009, 69–94) to pursue this thought in the young Marx's writings fails in its task.

[32] For one of the best and careful analyses of Stirner in light what became Anarchism, see Leopold (2006), who also usefully defines Anarchism in terms of two categories: a necessarily negative one in which the state is illegitimate, and a peripheral positive one that is the subject of much disagreement, for it concerns the necessity or otherwise of an alternative structure and its content (collective or liberal).

[33] Tellingly, similar language appears in a piece written in the same year, on the *Bauernkrieg* of 1525 (Engels 1850a, 1850b). Here Engels speaks of the peasant demands for the *Abschaffung*, *Zerstörung*, *Beseitigung*, *Vernichtung* and *Aufhebung* of a whole range of landlord and priestly privileges, burdens on peasants, serfdom, feudal rule, and indeed of all authority. Clearly, the language was appropriate for such a revolutionary movement.

[34] Except for *Vernichtung* and this only with reference to the fashions of popular thought rather than the state.

the bourgeois ordering of society.[35] More importantly, Engels identifies the German source of the idea with Max Stirner—an obvious point in light of the analysis I have already undertaken. True, Proudhon's '*anarchie*' had also become associated with the idea, but in Germany it was Stirner's *The Ego and Its Own*, on which Engels promises to focus since the book itself had been neglected of late. Those who used its slogans did so only by hearsay. At this point, the rough draft unfortunately breaks off, for Engels never managed to undertake the promised analysis.

Even more significantly, Engels mentions explicitly for the first time two points: the necessary delay for any 'abolition' of the state and a redefinition of what *Abschaffung* means. Both appear in a crucial sentence: 'The *Abschaffung* of the state has meaning with the Communists, only as the necessary consequence [*nothwendiges Resultat*] of the *Abschaffung* of classes, with which the need for the organised might [*Macht*] of one class for the keeping down [*Niederhaltung*] of others of itself falls away [*von selbst … wegfällt*]' (Engels 1850c, 330; 1850d, 486).[36] Earlier, we encountered the necessity of prior conditions before even the specific item of private property could be abolished. The conditions in question may have been described in different ways, such as the all-round development of individuals (*The Holy Family*) or the development of productive forces so as to enable a community of property ('Principles of Communism'), but the theoretical point concerning such a delay is the main point. By 1850, this delay is applied to the state, particularly in response to the fashionable slogan concerning the state's abolition, and the prior condition is the *Abschaffung* of classes and class oppression.

The second point concerns a terminological shift. Engels begins by using Stirnerian terminology, referring to the *Abschaffung* of both classes and then the state. But when he spells out how the prior conditions work, he replaces *Abschaffung* with *wegfallen*, with the literal sense of fall away and the metaphorical senses of cease to apply, be discontinued and become no longer necessary. What falls away? The organised *Macht* of one class to keep down or suppress other classes 'of itself falls away [*von selbst … wegfällt*]'. The shift is crucial, for it becomes a more natural and objective process, taking place automatically or 'of itself [*von selbst*]' once other conditions have been met. The choice of *wegfallen* is also significant since Engels would come to use the term later when seeking to distinguish the communist position from that of the Anarchists under Bakunin. Obviously, it was a precursor to the notion of the state's dying away. Even in this piece, Engels goes on to connect the state's *Abschaffung* with '*Anarchie*' (the term appears nine times in the brief draft). But this is not the communist position.

[35] Even today, it has become a curious bourgeois fallacy in the guise of a now-defunct 'neo-liberalism' (Hirszowicz and Mailer 1994).

[36] This is actually part of a quotation from a slightly earlier review by Marx and Engels of Emile de Girardin's *Le socialisme et l'impôt* (Marx and Engels 1850c, 297; 1850d, 333). Since Engels elaborates further, I focus on his piece.

4.4 Struggle with the Anarchists

Between Engels's incomplete piece of 1850 on the *Abschaffung* of the state, where we find the clear articulation of the necessary delay for any such development and an early redefinition in terms of the state's falling away, and the intense struggle of the 1870s, there is curiously little material on such matters. This gap coincides with two others. First, any talk of *Abschaffung* or even *Aufhebung* of private property, class struggle and the state, is also largely absent. Instead, we find low-level usage of these terms, to speak of the usual suspects such as taxes, slavery, serfdom and other feudal aspects.[37] Second, during the same period there is also an absence of any mention of the proletarian dictatorship, which disappears for some two decades until it reemerges when tensions with the Anarchists, and Bakunin in particular, came to a head. As for Bakunin, one or two fleeting references appear during this period since he had become active in European circles (Engels 1851–1852, 79–80; Marx 1853). Somewhat distant, appreciative of his revolutionary gusto, engaged in the inevitable rumours of radical circles (one such being that Bakunin was a Russian spy), these references give no premonition of the intense struggle that exploded in the late 1860s.

It is precisely that material that interests me in this section, in which I begin with an analysis of Bakunin's position, before turning to the key philosophical differences in the struggle itself—which Engels and Marx at the time felt was the 'most serious crisis [*la crise la plus sérieuse*]' of the International since its foundation (1872a, 5). From here, I focus on the resulting greater clarity concerning the state's natural falling or dying away, as a consequence of socio-economic transformations after a revolution and the effort to construct socialism. Throughout, my focus is on the philosophical differences, which have profound consequences for revolutionary strategy, and leave aside the gritty detail of the struggle itself that came to a head at the Hague Congress of 1872, when Bakunin and his co-conspirators were expelled from the International (IWMA 1871–1872, 306–307; Marx and Engels 1872e, 249–250; v1872e, 476).[38] Bakunin took it far more personally than Marx, using deeply racist terms to excoriate

[37] In 1865 we find the first recurrence of '*Abschaffung aller Classenherrschaft*' (Marx 1865a, 54), albeit as a German translation published a little later of the original English, 'abolition of all class rule' (Marx 1865b, 13). In the same year, Marx wrote a series of letters to Johann Baptist von Schweitzer, where he mentions Proudhon's first book on property as epoch-making, but also quite sensational and not worth so much in a strictly scientific manner. At least, Marx points out, Proudhon challenged the rather utopian manner of earlier proposals that property should be '*aufgehoben*' (Marx 1865c, 60; 1865d, 26).

[38] It is difficult to find a relatively impartial and balanced account of the struggle, since inevitably the writer in question favours one side rather than another. To find such a work, we need to go back to Cole's study (1954). The actual struggle began in the late 1860s and ran into the 1870s. Related to the struggle, one finds resolutions, statements, minutes, newspaper items, and longer deliberations. I restrict references to—where possible—original language sources: Engels (1871b, 1871c, 1871d, 1871e, 1871a, 162–164; 1872b, 1872h, 1872m, 1872k, 1872f, 1872e, 1872g, 1872j, 1872i, 1872a, 1872l, 1873h, 1873e, 1873g, 1873c, 1873f; 1874a, 1874b, 1874c, 1874d, 1874e, 1877a), Marx (1868, 1869a, 1869b; 1870a, 1870b, 1872c), Marx and Engels (1871a, 1871b, 1871c, 1872a, 1872g, 1872e; 1872f; 1873a, 1874), IWMA (1869, 1871a, 1871b, 1871c, 1871d, 1871–1872). In

Marx for embodying all of what Bakunin saw as the worst features of the latter's Jewish, German and English personalities (Bakunin 1872b; see also Bakunin 1872a).

4.4.1 Bakunin and the Alliance

Given the fragmentary and incomplete nature of Bakunin's writings, it is perhaps too much to claim that Bakunin provided the system of thought and practice that turned an inchoate 'anarchy' into a movement now known as Anarchism.[39] Yet, he did provide the movement with an identifiable theoretical core: the state, in whatever form, is the foundation of all other types of exploitation, oppression and inequality; therefore, the first and primary act of a revolution is to abolish the state. Once this is achieved, economic exploitation and inequality would be overcome.

In a little more detail, Bakunin began with a common position among radicals at the time (see above): it matters not whether the state is a theocracy, monarchy, republic, or liberal democracy with universal suffrage, for all existing forms of the state are based on the systematic exploitation of the majority of working people by the economically and politically privileged classes, which will use all means possible to enhance their power. In other words, all states are despotic and their citizens are no better than slaves. Unlike the others, however, Bakunin went a step further: the only solution is to abolish the state as such (Bakunin 1867, 43, 145, 157–158; 1869b, 246; 1871b, 314; 1871f, 38–39).[40] As we saw earlier, only Stirner before him took

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the context of the struggle, Bakunin is mentioned explicitly for the first time in Marx's 'Confidential Communication' (Marx 1870b) and by the next year his name and the myriad organisations of which he was a part turn up very frequently.

[39] Since there is no complete English edition of Bakunin's works, I refer here to the earlier French edition in 6 volumes, particularly since most of Bakunin's revolutionary material was written in French. The exception is 'Statehood and Anarchy', which was written in Russian for a Russian audience and has recently been republished in the same language (Bakunin 1873a). The work has also appeared in good French and English translations (Bakunin 1873b; 1873c). A complete French edition of Bakunin's writings, begun by Arthur Lehning but left incomplete, has been published (Bakunin 1961–1981), with a subsequent gathering of the remaining material, plus original language texts, on a CD-ROM and published by the Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis in Amsterdam (Bakunin 2000). One may also refer to the selected works in Russian and complete works in Italian (Bakunin 1922; Bakunin 1977–2009). Further, James Guillaume has edited all relevant documents from the many Anarchist organisations and their myriad gatherings (Guillaume 1905–1910).

[40] Note the following: 'l'État, sous ses formes différentes, depuis l'État théocratique et la Monarchie la plus absolue jusqu'à la République la plus démocratique basée sur le suffrage universel le plus large, n'est autre chose qui le régulateur et le garantisseur de cette exploitation mutuelle' (Bakunin 1871b, 314). 'Tous les États actuellement existants, fondés exclusivement sur l'exploitation systématique et réglée du travail Populaire par les classes économiquement et politiquement privilégiées, ont pour base la violence et pour but unique l'agrandissement de leur puissance au détriment des peuples voisins et par tous les moyens possibles. C'est pourquoi je conclus à la nécessité de l'abolition de tous les États, comme condition absolue de l'établissement de la justice et de la paix dans le monde' (Bakunin 1869b, 246).

this step, for the others—even Proudhon—imagined alternative forms of governance, if not a thoroughly new form of the state.[41] Although he does not mention Stirner explicitly in his extant works, Bakunin echoes the same sentiments. For example: 'Donc là où commence l'État, la liberté individuelle cesse et vice-versa' (Bakunin 1867, 142).[42] Why? The state entailed 'l'autorité', 'la force', if not 'l'ostentation et l'infatuation de la force' (Bakunin, 1871b, 288). Bakunin had a tendency to attribute this 'authority' to the cosy arrangement with the church, rather than offering any sustained socio-economic analysis (Bakunin 1867, 1871b). Indeed, his war against the state was at the same time a war against the church.

In this light, the oft-repeated slogan, with minor variations, was: 'l'*abolition* totale de l'État' (Bakunin 1871f, 39, 79, 89; 1870a, 57; 1873c, 197, 218).[43] This abolition had political, economic and religious dimensions, for—according to Bakunin—political power enabled classes and the domination of masters over slaves, of exploiters over the exploited, if not capitalism itself (Bakunin 1870a, 39; 1871d, 127; 1872a, 403; 1873c, 219). And since the state was the 'frère cadet de l'Église', the church too would need to be abolished (Bakunin 1870b, 108; 1871c, 344–345). As for what would follow, Bakunin spoke rather vaguely of the organisation of production through 'collectives' (Bakunin 1871g, 207; 1871a, 402–403), or 'la libre fédération des associations locales' (Bakunin 1868–1869, 75, 176–177).[44] These local collectives would seek economic and social equality through education, the 'jouissance' derived from the products of labour, liberty and solidarity without differences between the sexes and the nations (Bakunin 1868,1869, 74).[45]

Obviously, this approach had no place for any notion of a collective dictatorship or socialist *Gewalt*, which would deploy the machinery of state to destroy the former ruling class and bring about economic transformation (Bakunin 1873c, 177–181). For Bakunin and those who followed him, such a move entailed the recreation of

[41] Or, as Engels puts it in a letter from 1889: 'Proudhon's harmless, purely etymological anarchy (i.e. absence of government) would never have resulted in the present anarchist doctrines had not Bakunin laced it with a good measure of Stirnerian "outrage"' (Engels 1889a, 293; 1889b, 394).

[42] Similarly: 'L'État est donc la négation la plus flagrante, la plus cynique et la plus complète de l'humanité' (Bakunin 1867, 150; see also Bakunin 1869a, 225–226; 1870a, 62); 'l'État le bien naît non de la liberté, mais au contraire de la négation de la liberté' (Bakunin 1867, 160; see also Bakunin 1869a, 225–226; 1870a, 62).

[43] Occasionally, Bakunin spoke of the state 'dissolving [*se dissoudre*]' into a society organised according to justice (Bakunin 1867, 56), but his preference is for the stronger terminology of deliberate and willed abolition.

[44] In *Statism and Anarchy*, Bakunin sought to make a virtue of such vague formulations, since 'the masses bear all the elements of their future organisational norms in their own more or less historically evolved instincts, in their everyday needs and their conscious and unconscious desires' (Bakunin 1873c, 135).

[45] In French: 'Seulement à la destruction de cet empire, à la liquidation de tout État politique dans les pays qu'il embrasse … L'abolition non seulement politique mais économique des classes; l'égalisation économique et sociale des individus dans l'éducation, dans le travail et dans la jouissance des produits du travail, afin que pour tous les individus humains sur la terre, sans difference de nations et de sexe, il n'y ait plus qu'un seul mode d'existence, et que cette nouvelle existence se manifeste par la plus grande liberté de chacun, fondée sur la plus étroite solidarité de tous. Eh bien, nous les défions de réaliser ce but dans un État politique quelconque!' (Bakunin 1868–1869, 74).

yet another 'aristocratic government', in which a new ruling class would exploit the majority in the name of 'bonheur commun' (Bakunin 1871e, 263–264). Any new state would mean nothing less than a rupture with working class solidarity (Bakunin 1872b, 344). By this time, the struggle with the Communists in the International had come to a fever pitch, and so Bakunin often contrasts his position with the communist approach, seeking to claim the Paris commune as a model of what an anarchist project would be (Bakunin 1871e, 250–259). Recall here Engels's concerted effort to identify the Paris commune with the proletarian dictatorship in the 1890s. The immediate context may have been struggles within the German Social-Democratic Party, but we may also detect here a belated answer to the anarchist effort to claim the Paris commune. But did Bakunin use the term 'anarchie'? He fostered many organisations, often overlapping, secretive, small, with ever new names, and with a propensity for grand and eloquent statements. On occasion, he was more than happy to claim the title: "L'*anarchie*, c'est nous, les partisans de l'abolition de l'État dans l'Internationale' (Bakunin 1871a, 323, also 351).

4.4.2 The Struggle

Amidst the immediate struggles, plots, splits and polemic, four theoretical issues stand out in the struggle between the Communists and Anarchists: the basis of the current system and thus the primary target of revolutionary action; objective and subjective factors in such action; the role of authority and thus *Gewalt*; and the nature of the International itself. Let me take each in turn.[46]

The core issue was that of the foundation of the current system. Although Marx made occasional observations on this matter,[47] it fell to Engels to sharpen and elaborate this crucial philosophical difference with the Anarchists. He does so particularly well in an 1872 letter to Theodor Cuno, not least because Anarchism had some traction in Italy. Engels writes that Bakunin's chief point is that 'he does not regard capital, and hence the class antagonism between capitalists and wage workers which has arisen through the development of society, as the main evil to be eliminated [*zu beseitigende*], but instead the *state*' (Engels 1872c, 388; 1872d, 306). This means that Bakunin holds that 'the *state* has created capital, that the capitalist has his capital only *by the grace of the state*'. The outcome is a distinct sequence of revolutionary

[46] These topics arise from the actual material written during the struggle. For a somewhat different account, focusing on issues of human nature, freedom and political agency—albeit without reference to original language material or indeed much from the struggle itself—see Robertson (2003).

[47] In his notes on Bakunin's late piece, *Statism and Anarchy*, Marx observes that Bakunin's 'political rhetoric' concerning social revolution has a glaring gap: 'its economic conditions simply do not exist for him [*existieren nicht für ihn*]' (Marx 1875a, 633; 1875b, 518). Or as he puts in relation to the specific item of abolishing inheritance, proposed by one of Bakunin's organisations, the International Alliance of Socialist Democracy: 'What we have to grapple with, is the cause and not the effect, the—economical basis—not its juridical superstructure' (Marx 1869c, 132; see also IWMA 1869).

action for the Anarchists: 'the state above all must be abolished [*abschaffen*]; then capital will go to the devil of itself [*gehe das Kapital von selbst zum Teufel*]' (Engels 1872c, 388; 1872d, 307). This much we have already seen in my earlier account of Bakunin's position. But a question arises as to how the state achieves this paramount role in Bakunin's schema. At times he links it with the Christian church, from which the state has acquired its quasi-sacred status. As Engels succinctly puts it: 'Autorität = Staat = absolut vom Übel' - authority = the state = absolute evil (Engels 1872c, 389).[48] Otherwise, Bakunin struggles to account for the state's historical rise and its function. As Engels and Marx observe elsewhere, 'Thus it is not the Bonapartist State, the Prussian or Russian State that has to be overthrown, but an abstract State, the State as such, a State that nowhere exists [*n'existe nulle part*]' (Marx and Engels 1873a, 176; 1873b, 466; 1874, 485).[49]

The difference with the communist position and that of the International could not be sharper: 'We, on the contrary, say: Abolish [*schafft … ab*] capital, the appropriation of all the means of production by the few, and the state will fall of itself [*so fällt der Staat von selbst*]'. Of note here is the way Engels invokes the term he had already used in 1850, with a minor variation: *fallen von selbst*, falls of itself. Earlier, he had spoken of *von selbst wegfallen*, but the choice of terminology is now more studied in a clear effort to distinguish the communist position from that of Bakunin. Engels emphasises the point: 'the *Abschaffung* of the state is nonsense without a social revolution beforehand; the *Abschaffung* of capital is the social revolution and involves a change in the whole mode of production' (Engels 1872c, 388; 1872d, 306; see also Engels 1872–1873a, 62; 1872–1873b, 370). Engels spends much of the letter dealing with Bakuninist intrigues, the latter's appeal in Italy, his effort to turn the International itself into a model of what a future society might be, and his dictatorial manner of leadership. But the philosophical point is the key.

This difference, writes Engels, is fundamental and essential (*wesentlich*). Behind it lies the position he and Marx had hammered out over the previous decades: socio-economic forces are primary and the state (along with other features, such as philosophy, culture, ideology and religion) are secondary. In other words, the forces and relations of production are the main concern, so only when they had been dealt with by various means of revolutionary action would it be possible to consider secondary phenomena such as the state. We see this basis also in Engels's formulation (see Chap. 2) that the state arises from class conflict and economic exploitation. It should

[48] Engels was rather fond of expressing this principle in various ways. For example, the Bakuninists hold that the state is 'the root of all evil [*Prinzips des Bösen*]', or the 'epitomy of all evil [*Inbegriff alles Bösen*]' (Engels 1873c, 324; 1877a, 89–90). The terminology was not new to Engels. Already in 1844, he had observed in a comment in relation to William Godwin (recognised now as one of the founders of Anarchism) that he 'attacked the very essence of the state itself with his aphorism that the state is an evil [*Übel*]' (Engels 1844a, 555; 1844b, 486).

[49] See also Marx's observation in his notes on Bakunin's *Statism and Anarchy*: 'Since therefore the propertied classes cannot satisfy the passion and the aspirations of the people, "only one means is left them—state force (государственное насилие), in a word, the *«state»,* because the actual meaning of *«state»* is *«Gewalt» (violence, véhémence, force), «government by Gewalt,* concealed if possible, but if the worst comes to the worst, a ruthless *«Gewalt»*, etc." (Marx 1875a, 604; 1875b, 493). Translation modified.

be no surprise, then, that already by 1850 the necessary delay in what Engels called the 'falling away [*wegfallen*]' (Engels 1850c, 330)' of the state had become a clear position. By the time of the struggles with the Anarchists under Bakunin, this position concerning the state was reiterated and sharpened.

The second issue concerned what may, in Marxist parlance, be termed the tensions between objective and subjective factors in revolutionary action. Echoing the earlier criticism of Stirner, Marx observes in his notes on Bakunin, '*Willpower* [*Der* Wille], not economic conditions, is the basis of his social revolution' (Marx 1875a, 633; 1875b, 518). Marx's brief point may potentially be misread. It may seem as though Marx is emphasising objective conditions as the basis for a revolution, while attributing to Bakunin reliance on subjective intervention.[50] When we turn to Engels, the distinction becomes one of emphasis rather than radical opposition. As Engels formulates the communist position, we find distinctly subjective factors in the primary revolutionary task of dealing with the forces and relations of production: abolishing (*abschaffen*) capital is clearly a subjective act of force (*Gewalt*). By contrast, the state's 'falling away' or 'falling of itself' becomes a reality due to prior objective conditions. The dialectical twist, of course, is that the new objective conditions—altered economic realities—were themselves created by subjective intervention. To give it one more twist: as we have seen in the previous chapter concerning socialist *Gewalt*, the state initially has a distinct role in the process of transforming the economic basis.

A third bone of contention was that of authority, which appears again and again in the material. In response to Bakunin's resolute and contradictory anti-authoritarianism, Engels was led to write the important text, 'On Authority' (Engels 1873a,1873b), which I have analysed in the previous chapter in relation the role of socialist *Gewalt*. I do not need to repeat that discussion here, save to point out that this debate over authority had immediate repercussions, for it affected the workings of the International itself. Simply put, since Bakunin assumed that any form of the state is the 'main evil [*Grundübel*]', then any working-class political action in the present was unacceptable (Engels 1872c, 388; 1872d, 306). Yet, the two sides did engage in direct political struggle through and in the International. The key item was article 7a (8 in the draft)[51] of the resolutions debated at the Hague Congress of 1872. After much debate and disagreement, it was finally passed with 28 votes in favour

[50] Elsewhere, both Engels and Marx quote from 'The Program of the International Brotherhood' of 1869: 'This association proceeds from the conviction that revolutions are never made either by individuals or by secret societies. They come about, as it were, of their own accord [*d'elles mêmes*], produced by the force of things [*la force des choses*], by the course of events and facts. They are prepared over a long time deep in the instinctive consciousness of the popular masses [*dans la profondeur de la conscience instinctive*], and then they flare up [*éclatent*]. … All that a well-organised secret society can do is, first, to assist in the birth of the revolution by spreading among the masses ideas corresponding to their instincts' (Marx and Engels 1873a, 179; 1873b, 469; 1874, 485–486).

[51] The draft, with the new article emphasised, appeared in French and English (Marx 1872a, 426; 1872b, 201).

and 13 against (plus 10 more in favour who had to leave early). Given its importance, the article appears in a number of places:

> In its struggle against the collective power [*kollektive Macht*] of the propertied classes, the proletariat cannot act as a class except by constituting itself into a political party, distinct from, and opposed to, all old parties formed by the propertied classes.
>
> This constitution of the working class into a political party is indispensable in order to insure the triumph of the social revolution, and of its ultimate end, the *Abschaffung* of classes.
>
> The combination of forces which the working class has already effected by its economical struggles ought, at the same time, to serve as a lever for its struggles against the political power [*Macht*] of landlords and capitalists.
>
> The lords of land and the lords of capital will always use their political privileges for the defence and perpetuation of their economical monopolies, and for the enslavement of labour. The conquest of political power [*Macht*] has therefore become the great duty of the working class (Marx and Engels 1872d, 149; 1872e, 243).

The paradox in the Anarchist approach to this article should be obvious: by opposing the article itself and in their efforts to take over the International they engaged in the very political action that they decried. But a question remains: what was the alternative to the International's focus on uniting the working class with a view to revolution? For the Bakuninists, it would entail turning the International itself into a model of the new authority-free and stateless society, which would come into its own after a revolutionary abolition of the state (Engels 1872c, 389; 1872d, 307). As Engels and Marx observe, 'In other words, just as the medieval convents presented an image of celestial life, so the International must be the image of the New Jerusalem, whose "embryo" the Alliance bears in its womb' (Marx and Engels 1872a, 42; 1872b, 115).[52]

Although this difference had immediate ramifications for the International itself, particularly at The Hague Congress—with Bakunin and others expelled and the International itself moved out of harm's way to New York—it also had significant repercussions for the type of governance that would take place after a proletarian revolution. For Bakunin's 'fantasy socialism' (Marx and Engels 1873a, 172; 1873b, 461; 1874, 480), even a revolutionary dictatorship was an evil, a source of yet more 'exploitation and despotism'. As Engels and Marx put it starkly, Bakunin 'declares that all the revolutionaries who, on the day after the revolution, want "construction of a revolutionary state" are far more dangerous than all the existing governments put together', with the consequence that the Anarchist task is to 'disorganise the revolution' (Marx and Engels 1873a, 177; 1873b, 467; 1874, 484). This curious approach would hardly appeal to Engels, Marx or any other Communist, not merely

[52] The allusion to 'embryo' is in response to the 'Sonvillier Circular', from the gathering in that town in November 1871 that saw the emergence of the Jurassic Federation: 'The future society must be nothing else than the universalisation of the organisation that the International has formed for itself. We must therefore strive to make this organisation as close as possible to our ideal. How could one expect an egalitarian society to emerge out of an authoritarian organisation? It is impossible. The International, embryo of the future society [*embryon de la future société humaine*], must from now on faithfully reflect our principles of federation and liberty, and must reject any principle tending toward authority and dictatorship' (Guillaume 1905–1910, Vol. 2, 240).

because it entailed undermining any successful revolution, but also since socialist *Gewalt* through the proletarian dictatorship—as particularly developed by Engels—would be a core feature after a revolution. In other words, the Bakunist approach would ensure that any revolution would fail, for the obvious reason that it would be unable to deal with the inevitable counter-revolutionary push. As Engels put it in his account of the failed Spanish revolution of 1873: 'the Bakuninists in Spain have given us an unparalleled example of how a revolution should *not* be made' (Engels 1873c, 339; 1873d, 598).

Clearly, a basic philosophical and political difference existed between Communism and Anarchism, with significant repercussions.[53] It is not for nothing that each saw the other's approach as wrong-headed, as inverting the whole process. At the same time, Engels and Marx could assert—for polemical reasons—that the way one should understand 'anarchy' is in terms of the International's position:

> All socialists see anarchy as the following program: once the aim of the proletarian movement, i.e., abolition of classes [*l'abolition des classes*], is attained, the power of the State [*le pouvoir de l'État*], which serves to keep the great majority of producers in bondage to a very small exploiter minority, disappears [*disparaît*], and the functions of government become simple administrative functions [*les fonctions gouvernementales se transforment en de simples fonctions administratives*]. (Marx and Engels 1872a, 49–50; 1872b, 121).[54]

In other words, if you want 'anarchy' then this is what is means. This move, at the close of a private circular letter to other branches of the International, indicates very clearly the fundamental differences with Bakunin's operation: the state—as a feature of the superstructure—would disappear only when all other conditions had been met. By contrast, the 'Alliance reverses the whole process [*prend la chose au rebours*]…' (Marx and Engels 1872a, 50; 1872b, 121). Indeed, if one should follow the prescriptions of the Alliance, the secret police of the various European state would be more than happy.

4.4.3 The Anarchist Fiasco in Lyons

By now is should be clear that the struggle between Communism and Anarchism—political, organisational and philosophical—enabled a sharpening for Engels and Marx of what was already an established position: the process of the state's falling away would take place after other, specifically economic and social, conditions had been achieved. There was, however, a particular incident that provided a telling

[53] Engels occasionally seeks to locate the Bakuninist moment with the sectarian intrigues as characteristic of the early and necessarily immature stage of the communist movement, but one that it outgrows with time (Marx and Engels 1872a, 32–34; 1872b, 106–107; Engels 1877a, 1877b). This overall approach would come to fruition with the opening sections of 'Socialism: Utopian and Scientific' (1880a, 1891, 1880b).

[54] This text was originally published in French and has thus far appeared in this form in the collection *Le Mouvement Socialiste*, in 1913.

example of these differences. It concerned a revolutionary moment in Lyons, on 28 September, 1870. Engels and Marx give the following description:

> The revolutionary movement in Lyons was just flaring up. Bakunin hastened to rejoin his lieutenant, Albert Richard, and his sergeants, Bastelica and Gaspard Blanc. On September 28, the day of his arrival, the people had occupied the Town Hall. Bakunin installed himself there. And then came the critical moment, the moment anticipated for many years, when Bakunin could at last accomplish the most revolutionary act that the world had ever seen: he decreed the *Abolition of the State* [*l'Abolition de l'État*]. But the State, in the shape and form of two companies of bourgeois National Guards, made an entry through a door which had inadvertently been left unguarded, cleared the hall, and forced Bakunin to beat a hasty retreat to Geneva (Marx and Engels 1873a, 184–185; 1873b, 476; 1874, 491).

Both Engels and Marx thoroughly enjoyed mentioning this fiasco on many occasions (Engels 1871a, 162; Marx 1870c, 88–89; Marx and Engels 1872a, 17; 1872b, 93; 1873a, 177–179, 208; 1873b, 467, 468–469, 504–505; 1874, 495, 496–497, 530), not merely since it was an acute embarrassment for Bakunin and his co-conspirators, but even more so since it revealed the misdirected nature of the Anarchist program. Despite the grandiloquent abolition, the state was put 'back on its feet, all in less than an hour' (Engels 1871a, 162), while Bakunin was left 'with the miraculous decree [*décret mirifique*] in his pocket' (Marx and Engels 1873a, 178; 1873b, 467; 1874, 485).

4.5 Dying Away

Finally we come to the terminology of the 'dying away' of the state, although it remains a somewhat contentious issue even today in discussions over the writings by Engels and Marx. The interpretations vary considerably, depending on one's presuppositions and selection of texts: Engels (and Marx) held to the *Abschaffung* (abolition) of the state, so much so that they were quasi-anarchists (Kelsen 1949, 12; Tucker 1967); or they initially shared a general abolitionist stance but later clarified their position in response to Bakunin and Anarchist theory (Draper 1970, 283–284; 1990, 107–111); alternatively, they were authoritarians at heart, toying with the state's abolition but never doing so seriously (Adamiak 1970); or the state would 'wither away' (the preferred English term) very soon after a proletarian revolution, when class conflict would disappear and with it the state (Medalie 1959; Hunt 1984, 231–246). All of these assumptions can now be seen as largely or entirely mistaken, as the painstaking research through all of the relevant material undertaken in this chapter indicates. Instead, we have found that *Abschaffung des Staates* was not a common position at all among German radicals in the 1830s and 1840s. They may have spoken of the *Abschaffung* of private property, or (less so) of money and inheritance, but not the state. The influence of Proudhon was strong at the time, which we see with the emphasis on private property. But the only one who really proposed the *Abschaffung des Staates* was Max Stirner, and the topic appears in early material by Engels and Marx only in relation to Stirner.

More importantly, the idea of a necessary delay even in the abolition of private property appears in these early years. The key moment is Engels's catechetical 'Principles of Communism' from 1847, where the abolition of private property requires necessary preconditions to be established after a proletarian revolution before such an abolition could take place. This delay also appears in *The German Ideology* in relation to political institutions and in the Communist Manifesto in a more muted fashion, but the moment when it is applied directly to the state is in Engels's unfinished piece from 1850, 'On the Slogan of the Abolition of the State'. Here Engels makes it very clear that the communist position is that the state would only be abolished (he still uses *Abschaffung*) after some time, subject to transformation of the socio-economic base. In the same piece, Engels also replaces *Abschaffung* with *von selbst wegfallen*, falls away of itself, indicating a more objective and natural process after specific socio-economic conditions had been met. This terminology would be recalled in the later struggle with Bakunin.

This struggle between the Communists and Anarchists exploded some two decades later, with the consequent clarification of positions. Given his insistence that the state is the primary evil and cause of all oppression and suffering, Bakunin advocated that the first revolutionary act should be the willed and conscious abolition of the state. For Engels (and Marx), this approach simply did not make sense in light of the approach they had established in the preceding decades. Since the socio-economic base was primary, and since the state (among other features) was a secondary development, the main concern after a proletarian revolution would be transforming socio-economic conditions: first came the arduous process of liberating the forces of production through common ownership of the means of the production and destroying the bourgeois dictatorship; only then would it be possible to consider the natural disappearance of 'falling away' of the state. The struggle had other features—objective versus subjective, authority, and the structure of the International—but for my purposes this was the key philosophical difference, with profound political ramifications.

4.5.1 Letter to August Bebel: Making Use of the State Until It Dissolves

As should be obvious by now, most of the material comes from Engels (albeit in discussion with Marx). Above all, the clarity of the formulations we owe to Engels,[55] so I conclude this chapter by focusing on three of his texts. First, in his comments to Bebel on a draft of what became the Gotha Program (uniting the Eisenach and Lasallean wings of the German parties into the United Social-Democratic Workers' Party of Germany), Engels writes:

[55] This reality has not prevented more than a few seeing it as primarily a Marx-Bakunin struggle (Bloom 1946; Robertson 2003; Choat 2016).

> The *people's state* has been flung in our teeth *ad nauseam* by the anarchists, although Marx's anti-Proudhon piece and after it the *Communist Manifesto* declare outright that, with the introduction of the socialist order of society, the state will dissolve of itself and disappear [*sich von selbst auflöst und verschwindet*]. Now, since the state is merely a transitional institution of which use is made in the struggle, in the revolution, to keep down one's enemies by force [*gewaltsam*]… so long as the proletariat still *makes use* of the state, it makes use of it, not for the purpose of freedom, but of keeping down its enemies and, as soon as there can be any question of freedom, the state as such ceases to exist [*hört der Staat als solcher auf zu bestehen*]' (Engels 1875a, 6–7; 1875b, 71).

Engels not only prefers the language of dissolve (*auflösen*), disappear (*verschinden*) and cease to exist (*aufhören zu bestehen*), but he also provides a clear narrative with implications for the next chapter: the revolutionary working class must make use of the state, exercising *Gewalt* in order to deal with class enemies and the counter-revolution. Only when this opposition has been overcome can it become possible to consider the state's winding down.

4.5.2 *On the Death of Karl Marx: Gradual Dissolution of the State as a Final Result*

The second is a text I have already quoted in part (in relation to socialist *Gewalt*), but now its full meaning becomes clear. It comes from 'On the Death of Karl Marx':

> Marx and I, ever since 1845, have held the view that *one* of the final results [eine *der schließlichen Folgen*] of the future proletarian revolution will be the gradual dissolution [*allmälige Auflösung*][56] of that political organisation called *the State*; an organisation the main object of which has ever been to secure, by armed force, the economical subjection of the working majority to the wealthy minority. With the disappearance of a wealthy minority the necessity for an armed repressive State-force [*bewaffneten Unterdrückungs- oder Staatsgewalt*] disappears [*verschwindet*] also. At the same time we have always held, that in order to arrive at this and the other, far more important ends of the social revolution of the future, the proletarian class will first have to possess itself of the organised political force [*organisirte politische Gewalt*] of the State and with its aid stamp out the resistance of the Capitalist class and re-organise society (Engels 1883c, 419; 1883d, 477–478).

Again, the language is important: gradual dissolution (*allmälige Auflösung*) and disappear (*verschwinden*). Even more, this is *only one* of the final results (eine *der schließlichen Folgen*), right at the end of the revolutionary process. Far more important are other tasks, which appear again in a narrative sequence and now include the

[56] I have quoted the text from Engels's piece, 'On the Death of Karl Marx', although this section has a slightly complicated history. The section under analysis was initially drafted by Engels in English, in a letter to Philipp van Patten, but published first in German (also by Engels's hand) in *Der Sozialdemocrat* 21, 17 May, 1883. In the English draft, the text—as if to emphasise the point—reads 'the gradual dissolution and ultimate disappearance' of the State (Engels 1883b, 10). However, not only did the German version of the letter appear first, but the text on Marx's death was itself written in German, where Engels offers '*allmälige Auflösung* [gradual dissolution]' (Engels 1883a, 11; 1883c, 419).

reorganisation of society. By contrast, the Anarchists reverse the matter, asserting that the proletarian revolution 'has to *begin* by abolishing [*abschafft*] the political organisation of the State'. Note also the opening statement: both Engels and Marx had held such a position already since 1845. It may not have been articulated as clearly as Engels does here, but by and large this observation is correct. It flows from the whole approach they had developed.

4.5.3 Anti-Dühring: Dying Away of the State

The third and final text leads us into the next chapter, so I focus here only on what is relevant for the current argument. It is the famous text from the third edition of the *Anti-Dühring*, where Engels uses for the first time *abstirben*, die away, to capture all of the usages we have noted: dissolve, disappear, cease to exist and fall away of itself. Given its importance, I quote the text in full:

> As soon as there is no longer any social class to be held in subjection; as soon as class rule, and the individual struggle for existence based upon our present anarchy in production, with the collisions and excesses arising from these, are removed, nothing more remains to be repressed, and a special repressive force [*eine besondre Repressionsgewalt*], a state, is no longer necessary. The first act by virtue of which the state really constitutes itself the representative of the whole of society – the taking possession of the means of production in the name of society – this is, at the same time, its last independent act [*sein letzter selbständiger Akt*] as a state. State interference [*Eingreifen*] in social relations becomes, in one domain after another, superfluous, and then falls asleep of itself [*schläft dann von selbst ein*]; the government of persons is replaced by the administration of things, and by the conduct of processes of production [*die Verwaltung von Sachen und die Leitung von Produktionsprozessen*]. The state is not 'abolished'. *It dies out* [*Der Staat wird nicht 'abgeschafft'*, er stirbt ab]. This gives the measure of the value of the phrase 'a free people's state', both as to its justifiable use at times by agitators, and as to its ultimate scientific insufficiency; and also of the demands of the so-called anarchists that the state should be abolished overnight [*von heute auf morgen abgeschafft werden*] (Engels 1894a, 534–535; 1894b, 268).[57]

Here is embodied Engels's theory of the state, which I have analysed in detail earlier, as well as the narrative, not of the state's *Abschaffung* overnight but the state's gradual dying away (*abstirben*). Two points need to be made: first and most obviously, anyone who thinks that Communism advocates the *Abschaffung* of the state immediately after a proletarian revolution is simply mistaken. The conditions required are long and arduous, including class rule, the anarchy (note the term) of capitalist production, collisions and excesses in economy and class conflict. Only then can the state take control of the means of production on behalf of society—again note the emphasis. Second (and here Engels anticipates my next chapter), what happens to the state when it ceases to be a separated public power, a special

[57] See also the slightly earlier text: 'The proletariat seizes political power and turns the means of production in the first instance into state property. But, in doing this, it sublates itself [*hebt es sich selbst*] as proletariat, sublates [*hebt … auf*] all class distinctions and class antagonisms, [sublates] also the state as state' (Engels 1894a, 534; 1894b, 267).

repressive force, acting independently and interfering in the economy and society? The fundamental alienation (to use an earlier Hegelian term) between state and society so characteristic of capitalism and the bourgeois state, will die away. Thus, the state itself, as a separate public power, dies away. What is to come in its place? The key phrase is the 'administration of things and the management of the production process'. To see what this means is the subject of the next chapter.

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Chapter 5
Towards Enmeshed Socialist Governance

Abstract What forms of governance would emerge gradually during socialist construction? The answer has two parts. To begin with, public *Gewalt* loses its political character and becomes the administration of things and conduct of forces and relations of production, for the genuine good of society. While the statements on such matters from Engels (and Marx) are brief, Engels also drew from an abundance of information concerning pre-state forms of social organisation. He found complex and many-layered types of governance that were not separated from but stood 'in the midst of society' (and thus could not be a 'state'). We may speak of the 'enmeshed governance' of 'baseline communism', with its attendant form of democracy. What relevance does this material have for socialism, let alone communism? The answer is found in an 1882 work, 'The Mark'. Based on research into pre-state forms of social organisation in German history, Engels points out that communism would entail a dialectical transformation (*Aufhebung*) of this baseline communism. This transformation would both negate the original baseline communism and transform its core features into a qualitatively different reality. In this situation, it becomes increasingly difficult to speak of a 'state', let alone the separation of state and society.

Keywords Socialist governance · Public *Gewalt* · Depoliticised governance · Administration of economy · Standing in midst of society · *Aufhebung* of baseline communism

5.1 Opening Remarks

> True subjective freedom, which has equal rights with absolute freedom, calls for a different form of realisation than the state [*verlangt eine andere Form der Verwirklichung, als den Staat*]'. (Engels 1842a, 626; 1842b, 358–359)

One result of the previous chapters is that a contradiction has arisen: between the dictatorship of the proletariat and the commune, between socialist *Gewalt* and the dying away of the state. How to find a suitable solution, if not an *Aufhebung* of this contradiction? Not a few have struggled with the contradiction, suggesting—variously—that the proletarian dictatorship was really what Engels and Marx meant

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and that the state's dying away is of little consequence (Bloom 1946; Adamiak 1970), or emphasising the quasi-anarchist depiction of the commune and playing down the need for socialist *Gewalt* (Johnstone 1971; Balibar 1977, 58; Hunt 1984; Miliband 1991, 151; Nimtz 2000, 218–219; Van Ree 2015, 77, 115; Ware 2019, 161–163). As we saw in the third chapter, those who seek to soften the hard edge of the dialectic appear not only in our own time, for Engels already struggled with this tendency in the German Social-Democratic Party, a struggle that led him in his last years not only to emphasise socialist *Gewalt* and the proletarian dictatorship, but also to equate them with the Paris commune. At the same time, this solution is only the beginning of answer, a stop-gap for more significant elaboration. In searching for an answer, Engels at times deployed a narrative sequence, with socialist *Gewalt* necessary to see off the counter-revolution and bring about the necessary changes in the forces and relations of production, before any falling away of state power—as one of the final outcomes—could take place. Even so, this narrative leaves open the question: what did Engels suggest might be the appropriate forms of governance towards the end of the narrative? Would there still be some forms of authority, sovereignty and even *Gewalt*? Would the state—transformed—still be present, given his definition of the state as a separated public *Gewalt*?

The answer to these questions is as unexpected as it is simple. It has two key ideas: first, public power loses its political character and becomes the administration of things and the management of the economy; second, the many organs of governance would not be separated from society but stand in the midst of society, in a way that entails the dialectical transformation of baseline communism (a term preferable to 'primitive' communism).[1] This chapter examines each proposal in detail, but it is clear that whatever form of governance might appear, it could not be called a state as Engels had defined it—a separated public power. It would be a depoliticised form of social and economic management, a form of governance enmeshed within society and focused on the common good.

5.2 Public *Gewalt*, Political Character and the Administration of Things

The concise description of what may happen is as follows: public *Gewalt* loses its political character and is replaced by the administration of things and management of the processes of production for the sake of the true interests of society. This formulation is a gloss on a series of statements by Engels and Marx, but it captures each of the key terms. Let me exegete each one, although here we need to move cautiously since Engels and Marx were reluctant indeed to offer any more than

[1] The term—although not the content—is drawn from Graeber (2011, 89–126) and it is far preferable to 'primitive communism', since the connotations of 'primitive' are too problematic. It is also more than the 'tribal communism' mentioned in a letter to Paul Lafargue (Engels 1895, 488).

formulae, summary statements that may be taken as categories or indeed problems to be investigated further.

5.2.1 Public Gewalt

The important text here is the Communist Manifesto, where we find: 'When, in the course of development, class distinctions have disappeared, and all production has been concentrated in the hands of a vast association of the whole nation, the public power will lose its political character [*verliert die öffentliche Gewalt den politischen Charakter*]' (Marx and Engels 1848a, 482; 1848b, 505).[2] The first point to be made is that Engels would be the one to define the state as a 'separated [*getrennte*] public power'. As I indicated in Chap. 2, the key distinction is between what is separated and what is not. According to his definition, the state is determined by its separation from society.

But—and second—it is also clearly possible that a public power can be unseparated or integrated. On this matter Marx provides a slightly different formulation in the work—'Critique of the Gotha Programme'—that Engels ensured was published during the struggles with moderates in the German Social-Democratic Party. Here Marx asks, 'what transformation [*Umwandlung*] will the nature of the state [*Staatswesen*] undergo in communist society?' He then reframes the question: 'what social functions [*gesellschaftliche Funktionen*] will remain in existence there that are analogous to present state functions [*die jetzigen Staatsfunktionen analog sind*]?' (Marx 1875c, 21–22; 1875d, 95). Obviously, social functions will continue, even those analogous to the ones with which we are familiar.[3] Indeed, it was Engels who, a couple of years earlier, had spoken of 'public functions [*funzioni pubbliche*]' losing their 'political character [*carattere politico*]' (Engels 1873a, 86; 1873c, 425). Clearly, social functions, public functions, or public *Gewalt*—the three formulations we have encountered—would continue. How? They would not be at work as much in the earlier phase of exercising the proletarian dictatorship, the purpose of which is to overcome the counter-revolution and instigate far-reaching changes in socio-economic structures, but they would begin to emerge in the later phase, when the necessary preliminary tasks were complete and class struggle had faded away. It is precisely at this time that public power or social functions, as integrated rather than separated, would come into their own. I will have more to say on this matter in the next section concerning governmental functions that stand in the midst of society.

The third point returns us to the definition of the state. Thus far, we have been on familiar territory, with the state defined as a separated public power and the

[2] Engels cites this sentence from the Communist Manifesto, along with the slightly earlier French of Marx's 'Misère de la philosophie' (concerning the nature of *pouvoir politique* as the result of antagonism in *sociéte civile*) in a letter to Bernstein in early 1884, for the sake of refuting the charge by some that he and Marx had made 'concessions' to the Anarchists (Engels 1884a, 92; 1884b, 86).

[3] Marx continues with the reason why he (and Engels) refused to offer any more detail: 'This question can be answered only scientifically [*nur wissenschaftlich*]' (Marx 1875c, 22; 1875d, 95).

clear possibility for an unseparated public power. But the state is also, as these tight formulations indicate, determined by its political character. The clearest formulation appears in Engels's key work, 'Dell' Autorità', which was originally published in Italian in the midst of the struggle with the Anarchists (who were popular in Italy) and their 'anti-authoritarian' push. Engels writes: 'All socialists are agreed that the political state [*Stato politico*], and with it political authority [*l'autorità politica*], will disappear [*scompariranno*] as a result of the coming social revolution, that is, that public functions [*funzioni pubbliche*] will lose their political character [*carattere politico*]' (Engels 1873a, 86; 1873c, 425).[4] The state, or specifically the 'political state', is defined not only by its separation from society, but also by its political authority, or, as Engels reformulates, its political character. However, unlike public power, political character cannot continue without the state; this character is intimately entwined with the state. But what, exactly, does *politischer Charakter* mean?

5.2.2 Political Character

The answer is simple enough: by political character both Engels and Marx mean the reality of class struggle and its manifestation in the state. Thus, the Communist Manifesto observes, 'Political *Gewalt*, properly so called, is merely the organised *Gewalt* of one class for oppressing another' (Marx and Engels 1848a, 482; 1848b, 505).[5] I do not need to reiterate the details of Engels's work on the state here (see Sects. 2.2 and 2.3), for the point by now is obvious. Thus, if public *Gewalt* loses its political character, it ceases to be a manifestation and instrument of class struggle and thus coercion.[6] Clearly, public *Gewalt* is not necessarily separated from society, for it may take other forms.

The formulation may be relatively simple, but the implications are far-reaching. On this matter at least, Marx offers a couple of hints. In the final draft of 'The Civil War in France', he writes—in English—that the police were stripped of their 'political attributes, and turned into the responsible and at all times revocable agent of the Commune'. Indeed, so also 'were the officials of all other branches of the

[4] The German translation from the Italian reads: '*die öffentlichen Funktionen ihren politischen Charakter verlieren und sich in einfache administrative Funktionen verwandeln werden, die die wahren sozialen Interessen hüten*]' (Engels 1873b, 308).

[5] This text is a slight reformulation from 'Misère de la Philosophie' of the year before: 'political power is precisely the official expression of antagonism in civil society [*pouvoir politique est précisément le résumé officiel de l'antagonisme dans la société civile*]' (Marx 1847a, 177; 1847b, 212). Or as 'Fictitious Splits' puts it in the famous paragraph concerning Bakunin's war-horse: 'the power of the State [*le pouvoir de l'État*], which serves to keep the great majority of producers in bondage to a very small exploiter minority, disappears [*disparaît*]'. (Marx and Engels 1872a, 49–50; 1872b, 123).

[6] As Panitch observes (1980, 127), Engels and Marx 'meant not the end of public authority in society, but the end of class *repression* as embodied in the state'.

Administration' (Marx 1871, 139). Nothing more is said, but in light of the way political character (here as 'attributes') entails the manifestation of class struggle, then we may suggest that the police were no longer agents of an oppressing class, enforcing the laws that had been established by that class. Crucially, the police and indeed all other necessary officials continued in the Commune, but without the aforesaid 'political attributes'. While Marx continues, observing that not only 'municipal administration, but the whole initiative hitherto exercised by the State was laid into the hands of the Commune' (see the next section), Engels would take these points a step further when he edited Marx's essays and published them as a monograph in 1891. For Engels, these measures—among others—effectively began to lop off parts of the old state and were a clear manifestation of the dictatorship of the proletariat (Engels 1891b, 14–16; 1891c, 189–190). Of course, they were early and tentative measures that did not go far enough by any means.

5.2.3 De-politicised Elections

The second hint from Marx is even more intriguing. In his cryptic notes on Bakunin's *Statism and Anarchy*, Marx refers to what may be called non-political elections. How is this possible? Are not elections inherently political? This is so for those who have been indoctrinated by the Western liberal tradition, in which elections are the manifestation of regulated class conflict within the bourgeois state. So let us see what Marx suggests, all too briefly. He begins by pointing out that the character of an election depends in its 'economic foundation [*ökonomischen Grundlage*]', on the 'economic interrelations [*ökonomischen Zusammenhängen*] of the voters'. That is, if economic relations are antagonistic, and if classes have formed and are engaged in class struggle, then elections will be 'political'. What if this situation does not apply and economic relations are not antagonistic? Then 'the functions have ceased to be political [*die Funktionen aufgehört haben, politisch zu sein*]'. Marx then specifies the sense in which he uses *politisch*, or, rather, its absence. First, there are 'no ruling functions [*keine Regierungsfunktion*]'. I have stressed the sense of rule and reign that are part of the semantic field of *Regierung*, since 'government' or even 'administration' (also senses of the word) are too weak and do not capture Marx's sense. This meaning appears in the second point: 'the distribution of general functions has become a routine matter [*Geschäftssache*] which entails no domination [*keine Herrschaft*]'. By this time, Marx is not speaking about the period of the proletarian dictatorship, but afterwards, when antagonistic contradictions have ceased. Now we come to third point, where he observes: 'elections have nothing [*hat nichts*] of today's political character [*politischen Charakter*]' (Marx 1875a, 635; 1875b, 519–520). If political character means what pertains to antagonistic economic relations and class conflict, characteristic of the bourgeois state and its electoral system, then without that context, elections will lose, will have nothing of the political character of today—not only in Marx's context where the bourgeois state was gradually being

implemented across Western Europe, but also in those parts of the world influenced by this tradition, either in Europe itself or in some of its former colonies.

Let me offer an example drawn from elections in China. This example is drawn from a longer study of China's socialist democratic system, which has seven components: electoral democracy, consultative democracy, base-level or grassroots democracy, minority nationalities, human rights, rule of law, and leadership of the Communist Party (Boer 2021, 191–230). I cannot go into each component here, so I would like to make a few observations on how electoral and consultative democracy works in China.

As for elections, they pertain to five levels of people's congresses: (1) the supreme legislative body of the National People's Congress; (2) people's congresses in provinces, autonomous regions, and municipalities directly administered by the Central Government; (3) people's congresses in sub-districts of larger cities and in autonomous prefectures; (4) people's congresses of cities not sub-divided, municipal districts, counties and autonomous counties; (5) people's congresses in villages, minority nationality townships and towns. In relation to these five levels, the crucial distinction is between direct and indirect elections. At levels 4 and 5 elections are direct. Every citizen over the age of 18 has the right to vote, and such a right is not restricted by any factor, whether ethnicity, sex, occupation, education, occupation, or religion. Further, every such citizen may stand for direct elections. Levels 1–3 of the people's congresses have indirect elections: this simply means that delegates are elected from the people's congresses at levels 4 and 5. Do people actually vote and stand for election? Here the further regulations are important: an election is valid only when more than 50% of eligible voters in a district participate. Anyone may stand for election, and candidates may be nominated by all political parties and mass organisations, and by ten eligible voters in direct elections and by ten delegates in indirect elections. Further, in direct elections, the number of candidates must be 30–100% more than the number of delegates elected; in indirect elections, the excess of candidates to delegates elected should be 20–50%.

For our purposes, the crucial point is that all these elections—which are more than in capitalist democracies—are not undertaken through antagonistic political struggle. Instead, one can be elected on the basis of competence, experience, qualifications, and knowledge of China's socialist system. Further, electoral democracy is coupled with a long and rich experience—going back to the 'mass line' and practices in the Red Areas before Liberation in 1949—of consultative democracy. This process of consultation takes place today all the way from base-level or grassroots deliberations over local budgets to the institutionalised workings of the nation-wide Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. In this context, we find the role of the eight other political parties, minority nationalities, mass organisations, and many other groups. This name of this whole process—consultative democracy—should indicate clearly that does not have the 'political character' of bourgeois democracy, that it is depoliticised. In fact, both electoral democracy and consultative democracy function primarily in a depoliticised manner.

5.2.4 Administration of Things and Managing Production

In light of public *Gewalt* losing its political character, the proposal concerning the administration of things and managing production is straightforward. However, in contrast to the discussion thus far, the usage of 'administration of things' appears relatively late, after 1870. For example, in 'Fictitious Splits', Engels and Marx observe that 'the functions of government become simple administrative functions [*les fonctions gouvernementales se transforment en de simples fonctions administratives*]' (Marx and Engels 1872a, 49–50; 1872b, 121).[7] The most well-known and influential statement appears in Engels's *Anti-Dühring*: 'State interference [*Eingreifen*] in social relations becomes, in one domain after another, superfluous, and then falls asleep of itself [*schläft dann von selbst ein*]; the rule over people is replaced by the administration of things, and by the conduct of production processes [*der Regierung über Menschen die Verwaltung von Sachen und die Leitung von Produktionsprozessen*]' (Engels 1894a, 535; 1894b, 268). Once again, I have translated *Regierung* as rule rather than government, since the German carries a stronger sense—including reign and command—than the neutral-sounding 'government'. This sense is enforced by Engels's use of *über*, above or over. In its place comes the administration or stewardship of 'things [*Sachen*]', with a specific emphasis on production processes, or the economic base.

Let us pause for a moment, since the phrase used here—'the rule over people is replaced by the administration of things'—has a somewhat longer history. In 1822, a young Auguste Comte wrote: 'le gouvernement des choses remplace celui des hommes', the government of things replaces that of human beings (Comte 1822a, 102–103). The conciseness was that of Comte, although the sentence has often been attributed to his teacher, Henri de Saint-Simon.[8] With less conciseness, Saint-Simon also gave voice to the same idea, most notably in his 'Letters to an American': 'Politics is therefore, to sum up in couple of words, *the science of production*, that is to say, the science that has as its purpose the order of things most favourable for to all types of production' (Saint-Simon 1816, 189).[9] While Comte felt that his proposal constituted a 'truly sovereign law [*loi vraiment souveraine*]' (Comte 1822a, 103), which arose from the nature of human organisation and would finally overcome the arbitrariness of the divine right of kings or the sovereignty of the people, Saint-Simon's more voluminous exposition advocated the central role of 'industrialists'

[7] The later German translation renders this text as: '*die Regierungsfunktionen verwandeln sich in einfache Verwaltungsfunktionen*' (Marx and Engels 1872c, 50).

[8] It appeared originally in the third volume of Saint-Simon's journal, *Catéchisme des Industriels*, entitled 'Système des politiques positives' (Comte 1822b, 131), with a condescending introduction by Saint-Simon. Personal rivalries between teacher and student, the fact that it appears in the *Œuvres* of Saint-Simon and a history of repetition of the same mistake have led many to attribute the sentence itself to Saint-Simon (for example, Draper 1970, 282; Berlin 2002, 85, 166). For a summary of this history, see Bouglé and Halévy (1924, 162–163).

[9] The French reads: 'La politique est donc, pour me résumer en deux mots, *la science de production*, c'est à dire la science qui a pour objet l'ordre des choses le plus favorable à tous les genres de production'.

(a title liberals should claim), who would best be able to provide the most efficient administration of finance and social life.[10] Indeed, for Saint-Simon 'the science of production' was in the best interests of the communal reality of human existence (Saint-Simon 1816, 189). Only this approach, with government and political power focused on the necessary action to foster industry and the needs of workers, would lead to a truly free society. Our only wish, he went on, was to facilitate and clarify 'la marche nécessaire des choses' (Saint-Simon 1816, 166).

Yet, it was not to be Comte but Saint-Simon who would be credited with the idea.[11] Thus, Engels alludes elsewhere in *Anti-Dühring* to Saint-Simon, particularly the 'Letters to an American':

> In 1816, he declares that politics is the science of production, and foretells the complete absorption of politics by economics. The knowledge that economic conditions are the basis of political institutions appears here only in seed [*im Keine*]. Yet what is here already very plainly expressed is the idea of the future conversion of political rule over people into an administration of things and a direction of production processes [*die Überführung der politischen Regierung über Menschen in eine Verwaltung von Dingen und eine Leitung von Produktionsprozessen*] (Engels 1878, 428; 1894b, 246–247).

Notably, Engels is careful to say that Saint-Simon advocated the 'science of production', but not that he spoke of the 'administration of things [*Dingen*]'. Instead, Saint-Simon provided the thought in embryo or 'in seed [*im Keime*]'. The fuller version, in Engels's hands, became the administration of things as a result of public *Gewalt* losing its political character (and thus of the state falling asleep). Before proceeding, a small but significant point needs to be noted: Comte spoke of the 'government of things', while Engels formulates it as the 'administration of things'. As we saw earlier, the German sense of *Regierung* is stronger, bearing the idea of rule and command; Engels does not use this term to refer to *Sachen* or *Dingen.* Instead, he uses *Verwaltung*, which has more properly the senses of to administer or manage.

As for the *Sachen* and *Dingen*, the stuff of life, or the matters or things that pertain to human existence, liberals—of the conservative, centrist or Marxist variety[12]—have rushed to espy the origins of a 'totalitarian' sentiment in such a thought. In Engels, Marx, Lenin and others they decry a supposed technocratic mindset, the turning of human beings into 'things' (reification) in a form of governance for which 'Stalinism' is the ultimate symbol (Arendt 1961, 19–20; Harding 1984; Aron 2002, 175; Berlin 2002, 85, 166). Far better, is it not, to focus on human beings through politics, even if such a political character is fundamentally antagonistic. This charge relies on a wilful

[10] This emphasis is most notable in the cahier, *Catéchisme des industriels*, contained in the eighth, ninth and tenth volumes of the *Œuvres* (Saint-Simon 1820, 1821, 1825). Indeed, it was in the third cahier that Saint-Simon saw fit to publish the as yet unfinished work by Comte, 'Système de politique positive'.

[11] A possible allusion to Saint-Simon may appear in Marx's critique of Hegel, with his reference to 'the French', who 'have recently interpreted this as meaning that in true democracy the *political state goes under* [*politische Staat untergehe*]' (Marx 1843a, 32; 1843b, 30).

[12] I borrow this categorisation from Wallerstein (2011), who points out that as 'centrist liberalism' became triumphant in the relatively small but imperialistically dominant 'Western' world, conservatives, liberals themselves and Western socialists all worked within a liberal paradigm.

misreading of the phrase Engels championed: it is not the management of human beings as 'things', but the administration of the stuff of life for the 'true interests of society'.

We find this expression in Engels's insightful 'On Authority', quoted in part earlier:

> All socialists are agreed that the political state [*Stato politico*], and with it political authority [*l'autorità politica*], will disappear [*scompariranno*] as a result of the coming social revolution, that is, that public functions [*funzioni pubbliche*] will lose their political character [*carattere politico*] and be transformed into the simple administrative functions of watching over the true interests of society [*semplici funzioni amministrative, veglianti ai veri interessi sociali*]' (Engels 1873a, 86; 1873c, 425).

Watching over or guarding the true social interests, or as the later German translation has it, '*die wahren sozialen Interessen hüten*' (Engels 1873b, 308).[13] This is what the administration of things and conducting production means. Beyond the Italian, German and English renderings of this phrase, let me offer the Chinese translation: '*weihu zhenzheng shehui liyi*' (Engels 1873d, 338). The sense is to safeguard social interests and benefits (this is the sense of *liyi*), and it relates closely to another Chinese term, *gongtongti fuwu*, serving the community or society. *Gongtongti* is a word that arose in Chinese through the translation of the works of Engels and Marx, especially *The German Ideology* (1845–1846).[14] It is a rendering of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gemeinwesen*, but the *fuwu* (服务) is crucial, for it means to be in the service of society as whole, or the collective. For Engels, and indeed Marx, this is precisely what de-politicisation means, when public *Gewalt* has no political character: it serves the common of good of the collective.

A few examples: in bourgeois or liberal states, determined by the Western liberal tradition of antagonistic politics, nearly every feature of social and economic life is politicised. Think of education, or climate policies, or refugee and asylum issues, if not immigration as such, or health, or economic policy. The list could go on, but they are all political footballs, with one party having a different policy to another party. Thus, after a change in the ruling party, the successor spends much of its time undoing the initiatives of the previous ruling party. The result is a constant swerving, a back and forth that leads to inaction in crucial areas, and a sheer absence of long-term planning. What would happen if these areas lost their political character, and if assessments were based on actual and detailed scientific research as to what is needed for the good of the whole, with appropriate policies put in place that can be tested and revised as required? In my examples, which are drawn from China, this would include the comprehensive poverty alleviation project, which has run for more than four decades and lifted more than 800 million people out of poverty, or 7

[13] Note also that Wilhelm Weitling—whom Engels once called the 'founder of German communism' (Engels 1843, 505)—spoke of '*gut organisirten Gesellschaft* ' versus '*schlecht organisirt Gesellschaft*' (Weitling 1838–1839, 40–41). In the proposed 'Christian-communist state' (Weitling 1845, 134) based on a community of goods, we also find an emphasis on '*gesellschaftlichen Organisation*' (Weitling 1845, 177).

[14] Personal communication from Zang Fengyu, an old friend.

out of 10 people worldwide in the last four decades (World Bank 2019). By the time of writing, absolute poverty has indeed been eliminated. It would also include the 'preferential policies [*youhui zhengce*]' for minority nationalities, of which there are 55 in China (Boer 2019). All the way from economic development to fostering culture and language, these policies are based on the idea that distinct autonomous identity for such groups is the basis of Chinese unity. My third example concerns environmental policy, which remains a significant political football in many bourgeois states. The Chinese approach is that scientific investigation has established the reality of climate change and that concerted action is needed. The result is a comprehensive 'ecological civilisation [*shengtai wenming*]' approach, which draws on the Chinese tradition's concern with modes of life in relation to their environment. As a result, we continue to see world-leading achievements in—for instance—the greening of Beijing and many other cities, non-polluting energy production, and the fact that China is the world's number one country for re-afforestation.

Once again, I need to cut my examples short, but they give witness to how the brief proposals made by Engels, and Marx where relevant, may actually work. One last example, which concerns the crucial Marxist concern with liberating the forces of production. It was of course Deng Xiaoping who realised that China until the 1970s had focused too much on the relations of the production, on the ownership of the means of production and its associated socio-economic justice. The other side of the dialectic of constructing socialism had been relatively neglected, namely liberating the forces of production (Deng 1979, 1980; Boer 2021, 37–40). The result was the stunning 'Reform and Opening-Up' from 1978, which now has emerged in a global form as the Belt and Road Initiative. But is this too part of administering the stuff of life for the sake of true social interests, or as the Chinese puts it, serving the community? The answer may be found in Engels's piece, 'Karl Marx', from 1877:

> The productive forces of society [*gesellschaftlichen Produktivkräfte*], which have outgrown the control of the bourgeoisie, are only waiting for the associated proletariat to take possession of them in order to bring about a state of things in which every member of society will be enabled to participate not only in production but also in the distribution and administration of social wealth, and which so increases [*steigert*] the productive forces of society [*gesellschaftlichen Produktivkräfte*] and their yield by planned operation of the whole of production that the satisfaction of all reasonable needs will be assured to everyone in an ever-increasing measure (Engels 1877a, 109; 1877b, 193).[15]

5.3 Standing in the Midst of Society

The second major topic of this chapter focuses on what Engels calls the need to 'stand in the midst of society [*steht eben mitten in der Gesellschaft*]' (Engels 1892a, 265; 1892b, 270). Investigating this concept, largely through Engels's later writings, will

[15] Or, in *Anti-Duhring* he speaks of 'deliverance [*Befreiung*]' from the 'bonds [*Banden*]' of the capitalist mode of production and of 'the accelerated development of productive forces [*rascher fortschreitenden Entwicklung der Produktivkräfte*]' that socialism would bring (Engels 1894a, 536; 1894b, 269).

entail an anthropological-historical detour in order to extract the key philosophical insights, but let me begin with a text that I have invoked on a number of occasions. In *Anti-Dühring*, Engels writes of the end to class conflict and oppression, an end to the anarchy and collisions of production that give rise to such conflict. At this point, a 'special repressive force [*eine besondre Repressionsgewalt*]', that is, the state, is no longer needed. So far, so good, but the next two phrases are telling: he mentions the 'last independent act [*sein letzter selbständiger Akt*]' of the state as a state in taking control of the forces of production, and then of 'state interference [*Eingreifen*] in social relations' becoming superfluous as the state 'falls asleep of itself [*schläft dann von selbst ein*]' (Engels 1894a, 534–535; 1894b, 268). In this concise and influential narrative, the state's independence (*Selbststandigkeit*) is fading, being less and less able to interfere or intervene (*eingreifen*) in society. Behind this description is of course his whole theory of the separated public *Gewalt* of the state; as such an 'independent' *Gewalt*, its only way of engaging is to 'interfere'—as we find with assumptions in bourgeois states even today that the state interferes with the economy or with 'civil society'. The point here, however, is that Engels's narrative is leading to the end of such separation. But it is not to an unseparated state, for such an entity—in Engels terms—is an oxymoron. But what is it?

5.3.1 Pre-State Organisation of Society

To answer this question, I turn to Engels's detailed analysis of what may be called 'pre-state' formations, in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State.* His conclusion may be stated succinctly: in this form of social organisation, the 'organs of the gentile constitution [*Organe der Gentilverfassung*]' and 'organs of gentile society [*Organe der Gentilgesellschaft*]' 'stand in the midst of society [*steht eben mitten in der Gesellschaft*]' (Engels 1892a, 265; 1892b, 270). By 'gentile', Engels refers to the gens, which can also be rendered as clan or kinship group. How Engels arrives at this conclusion requires some more work, but I do not wish to repeat the narrative structure of Engels text (which moves from an enmeshed 'gentile constitution' that is torn asunder by state formations), but rather identify the key features of social organisation, the administration of the stuff of life in the three 'pre-state' locations examined by Engels: the Iroquois (based on Lewis Henry Morgan's research), ancient Athens and Rome, and then the German situation.

Engels seeks what he calls an 'organisation of a society [*die Organisation einer Gesellschaft*][16] which as yet knows no *state* [*noch keinen* Staat *kennt*]' (Engels 1892a, 204; 1892b, 201). This organisation has a number of lengthy stages, but since I will discuss the German situation a little later, let me focus on the material from the Iroquois, and from ancient Greece and Rome—in light of material available at

[16] Variations on this phrase comprise Engels's preferred ways of speaking about this 'non-state', whether *Gesellschaftsorganisation* (1892a, 195; 1892b, 190) or *gesellschaftliche Organisation* (1892a, 203; 1892b, 200).

the time.[17] This social organisation is predicated on distinctions between gens,[18] cross-cutting phratry, tribe and confederacy, and has the following key features.[19]

First, there were multiple levels of councils (*Rat*). At the lowest level of the gens, the council was 'the democratic assembly [*demokratische Versammlung*] of all adult male and female members, who had an equal voice [*gleichem Stimmrecht*]'. At the levels of tribe and confederacy, the council was representative, made up of leaders from the lower levels. Even here, all members of gens and tribe were able to express opinions, although the higher council made the final decisions. In the Greek, Roman and German situations, however, the tribal councils already had aristocratic elements, although they were subject to a popular assembly (*Volksversammlung*), which had significant decision-making powers and where everyone had a right to speak and vote in what he calls a 'naturally evolved democracy [*naturwüchsige Demokratie*]'. Indeed, this type of democracy may also be described as 'baseline democracy', the earliest of five forms of democracy in human history.[20]

Second, elections were held. They were direct at the level of the gens and indirect in the tribe and confederacy (direct at a tribal level among the Greeks). In other words, the elected representatives from the gens were meant to reflect its interests in the tribal council, as also were those elected indirectly to the confederate council. Elections were held for the roles of leaders,[21] but voting also took place in relation to a few other matters.

Third, leadership was not only determined by election but was also subject to recall. The fullest description applies to the Iroquois, where Engels finds in the gens a 'peace time headman [*Friedensvorsteher*]' or 'sachem' (compare the Greek *archon* and the Roman *princeps*), a 'leader in war [*Kriegsanführer*]' and 'Keepers

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[17] As Engels observes parenthetically, '(as far as our present sources of information go)' (Engels 1892a, 195; 1892b, 190). The main material concerns the Iroquois in the north-eastern Americas, based on Lewis Henry Morgan's *Ancient Society* (1877).

[18] On the matter of *gens*, Engels cannot resist a linguistic flair, speculating across Greek, Latin, Sanskrit, Old Norse, Gothic, Anglo-Saxon, English and Middle High German (Engels 1892a, 195, 131–132; 1892b, 190–191, 237). At least here he manages to contain what was really a fascination, and indeed ability with, multiple languages that stems from his youth. Elsewhere, he lets himself go with glee, exploring for page after page minor variations between dialects and languages (Engels 1882e, 344–351; 1882f, 47–57; 1882c, 373–396; 1882d, 81–107). The result—among many—is to show how political the option for one dialect or indeed language over others really is. For instance, 'High German' has nothing to do with origins and everything to do with political vagaries. Dutch would have as much a claim had political realities unfolded differently.

[19] The following sub-points—including quotations—are drawn from the relevant pages of *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, concerning the Iroquois, Greeks, Romans, Celts and Germans (Engels 1892a, 195–204, 211–214, 223–225, 232–243; 1892b, 191–201, 209–213, 222–225, 232–345). Following Marx's notes on Morgan, Engels clearly felt that the Iroquois provided the original form in its fullest detail.

[20] The other types of democracy are: ancient Greek slave-holder democracy (no longer practised); capitalist or bourgeois democracy (in Western Europe and a few of its former colonies); illiberal democracy (as practised in Russia, Hungary, Singapore, and so on); and socialist democracy (found in China, the DPRK, Vietnam, Laos, Cuba).

[21] Engels asserts that although no evidence exists for the Roman tribes, the chiefs (*principes*) must have been elected (Engels 1892a, 225; 1892b, 224–225).

of the Faith [*Glaubenshütern*]'. For the larger entity of the tribe, an occasional 'head chief [*Oberhäuptling*]' may be elected, with limited and temporary powers. And in the confederacy, while Engels is keen to emphasise that it had 'no official head, no chief executive' (for otherwise it would be too much like a state), he does note the election of 'two supreme war chiefs [*zwei oberste Kriegsführer*]'. So also were the Greek *basileus* and Roman *rex* elected military commanders; they exercised priestly and judicial functions, but had no ruling or commanding power (*Regierungsgewalt*). The ultimate power of making decisions lay with the relatively democratic councils at different levels, although Engels notes a tendency—especially among the Germans—for the military leader to accrue power, enforced with a retinue of increasingly permanent soldiers, that would become the basis for monarchy.

Fourth, the administration of a wide range of functions was undertaken by these layers of 'social organisation'. Apart from war and the mutual obligation for protection from aggression, these included: the management of land in common, often through mechanisms of allocation and reallocation; promulgation of moral codes and communal norms; use of specific names which entailed 'rights'; enforcement of norms for speaking in public (at councils); complex funeral and burial practices; enforcement of marriage rules and lines of inheritance; protection of members and avenging of wrongs, preferably through mediation; processes for adopting strangers; religious functions; and cultural activities. To be added here—at the level of tribe—is territorial integrity, with a distinct sense of neutral ground between one and the next tribe, and linguistic commonality across the various gentes that made up the tribe. A confederacy too could assume linguistic common ground across dialects.

5.3.2 Naturally Evolved Democracy

Obviously, these non-state formations had complex systems of organisation, with direct and indirect elections, councils at different levels, elected leadership, and significant administrative tasks. Engels is careful to avoid describing these formations as in any way a 'state', as in a *Gewalt* separated from society and as an expression and means of class struggle. Technically, he is correct—given the definition. But let us take another step. At one point, Engels observes concerning the gens council: 'In short, it was the sovereign power [*souveräne Gewalt*] in the gens' (Engels 1892a, 198; 1892b, 194). One may object: is this not the terminology of the state? Not if we keep in mind my earlier examination of socialist *Gewalt* (Sect. 3.8) and not if we focus on how Engels describes this 'council [*Rat*]'. It is a 'democratic assembly [*demokratische Versammlung*]' with a range of functions, and its elected leaders represent the gens at the levels of tribe and assembly. Crucially, this form of governance was inseparable from the people, integrated as a 'naturally evolved democracy' (Engels 1892a, 211; 1892b, 210). There was no separation, no 'public *Gewalt*' set over against the people.

5.4 *Aufhebung* of Baseline Communism

The philosophical principle from all this historical work is that such forms of social organisation stood in the midst of society; they were enmeshed within collective existence in a way that makes it impossible to speak of 'state' and 'society' as entirely separate entities. But the question remains as to the purpose of all this work by Engels in 1880s. The ultimate answer, and focus of this section, is that Engels sought to develop an *Aufhebung*, a dialectical transformation of this baseline communism. In short, the effort to construct communist forms of social and economic organisation in future would, in Engels's opinion, not entail an entire destruction of the old and a completely new beginning (as the Anarchists were wont to suggest); instead, it would involve a dialectical transformation of earlier moments of human history. This *Aufhebung* was not be a recovery a mythical Golden Age, beloved of conservative utopians and religious dreamers, but rather a thorough negation *and* transformation into a qualitatively new entity.

5.4.1 The Mark: History

This move on Engels's part arose from his intense studies of European, and especially German, history in the 1880s. In the midst of much other activity, Engels sought to develop a historical materialist analysis of German history from the earliest records (Roman), with a particular interest in pre-state formations, or baseline communism. Most of the work remained unfinished (Engels 1882e, 1882f, 1882c, 1882d, 1884c, 1884d),[22] remaining in draft and note form, although some of its results appeared in editions of *The Origin of the Family*. Not all of this material is relevant here, but there is one piece of particular interest: 'The Mark' (1882a, 1882b).[23] It was written in 1882 and was appended to editions of *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific* from the same year.[24]

The explicitly stated aim of the piece is to provide a 'short historical sketch' of how German peasants gradually lost their collective sovereignty over their land and how it may be recovered. This narrative begins with collective ownership, brought with the German tribes in their eastward migration, and runs through Roman, medieval

[22] We also find the results of this research appearing at significant moments in *Anti-Dühring* (Engels 1878, 302–306, 333–334, 368–370, 426–435, 444–447; 1894b, 95–99, 128, 166–168, 245–254; 1894a, 535–538; 1894b, 267–271).

[23] Although Engels refers frequently to the Mark in *The Origin of the Family*, I focus on this essay since it offers the most significant analysis (see Engels 1892a, 205, 224–225, 232–234, 235–236, 239–240, 254; 1892b, 202–203, 224, 232–234, 236–237, 241–242, 259).

[24] Engels draws primarily from the extensive studies of Georg Ludwig von Maurer, particularly those devoted to the Mark (Maurer 1854, 1856, 1865–1866). This initial work by Engels also gave rise to extended footnotes in later editions of *The Origin of the Family*, initially the Italian edition of 1885 and the Danish edition of 1888, and subsequently in English editions (Engels 1892b, 197–199, 236).

(Carolingian) and early modern capitalist periods. However, the account is by no means a linear story of an unending slide into greater servitude and exploitation. Instead, the account runs in two directions, closely related: on the one hand, there is the creeping extension of private property, indebtedness and loss of peasant 'rights'; on the other, the practices and assumptions of the Mark simply cannot be eradicated, for they run too deep in German consciousness. Engels takes it as his task to reconstruct them.

He begins by establishing two historical facts: the grouping of people according to kinship (however flexible such a category may have been [Boer 2015, 82–102]) and common property in the soil (*Gemeineigentum am Boden*). While the former determined settlement patterns, the latter shaped the forces and relations of production. How did this work? To begin with, it concerns field-shares: with land held in common, arable fields would be allocated regularly (usually annually) based on quality of the soil and ability of various clan units to work the soil. In light of much research since Engels's time, we now know that such an organisation of agricultural economics has an ancient pedigree indeed. It was socially determined, focused on labour rather than land, optimal use of resources, risk aversion for survival (resilient combinations of animal herds and crops), field shares with property held in common, village communities coterminous with kinship groups and an economic focus on the reallocation of labour and produce rather than extraction for profit. While specifics may have differed depending upon local practices, such as time frames for reallocation and the size of village communes, the consistency is remarkable. As for Engels, he outlines the practice according to evidence available to him, such as the ancient Suevi tribal group, more recently in the area of the Rhine-Palatinate in the earlier nineteenth century, and even in his own present on the Moselle and Hochwald. Elsewhere, Engels adds India, Russia and Ireland to his list (Engels 1874, 420–421), but in light of much subsequent research, these practices have also been found in medieval Europe, seventeenth-century North America, pre-1873 Japan, Russia, the Maghreb, pre-Ottoman and Ottoman periods, Iraq until the revolution of 1958, and twentieth-century Greater Syria and Greece (Granott 1952; Liverani 1975; Blum 1978; Roberts 1996, 15–37; Wilkinson 2003, 2010; Ault 2006).

Nonetheless, Engels's specific interest is the German Mark, which seems to be a modification of the initial practice of field shares from common land. To begin with, he identifies the Mark as arising from a collection of villages established on the common land of a 'mother village [*Mutterdorf*]', which together formed a 'Mark-association [*Markgenossenschaft*]'. The Mark proper, however, arose from the individual household and—in many cases the cultivated fields—passing into a form of private property, although the amorphous Latin '*possessio*' is the more appropriate term.[25] Engels attributes this development to natural conditions (particularly in narrow valleys) and German reconquest of Roman colonial lands, where Roman

[25] For the Romans and their legal invention of absolute private property (first in the late second century BCE, lost during the early European Middle Ages, and then gradually recovered and applied throughout much of Europe from the twelfth century CE onwards), the alternative category of *possessio* indicated that property that was not absolute and subject to many limitations. More specifically, *possessio* refers to the control of goods, with all manner of constraints and qualifications,

law and practices had an influence.[26] But this as far as such possession went: the Germans everywhere ensured the continuance of the 'mark system [*Markverfassung*], with common holding [*Gemeinbesitz*] of woods and pastures, together with the over-lordship of the mark in respect to the partitioned land' (Engels 1882a, 634; 1882b, 445). In short, they gave up none of the other rights over common lands. These rights pertained to: any minerals found in the soil beneath the level of a ploughshare; the threefold pattern of village crop-growing in which one of three fields was always fallow and thus common property for pasturage of animals; the common use of all other land, whether forests, pasture lands, heaths, moors, rivers, ponds, lakes, roads and bridges, hunting and fishing grounds (the many written laws, or *Weisthümer*,[27] which were gathered and codified during the thirteenth to eighteenth centuries, relate mostly to these aspects).

5.4.2 The Mark: Organisation

Now we come to the question of how all this was organised or administered. Let me quote the full description, since it resonates with the findings by Engels that I outlined earlier:

> Just as the members of the community originally had equal soil shares [*gleiche Bodenanteile*] and equal usage rights [*gleiche Nutzungsrechte*], so they had also an equal share [*gleichen Anteil*] in the legislation, administration, and jurisdiction within the mark. At fixed times and, if necessary, more frequently, they met in the open air to discuss the affairs of the mark and to sit in judgement upon breaches of regulations and disputes concerning the mark. It was, only in miniature, the ancient German people's assembly [*uralte deutsche Volksversammlung*], which was, originally, nothing other than a great assembly of the mark [*Markversammlung*]. Laws were made, but only in rare cases of necessity. Officials were chosen, their conduct in office examined, but chiefly judicial functions were exercised. The president had only to formulate the questions. The judgement was given by the aggregate of the members present (Engels 1882a, 636; 1882b, 447).

This description offers much more than 'village democracy', for it is nothing other than baseline communist democracy, with its elected representatives and the methods of dealing with all manner of issues relating to administration and jurisdiction. Above all, these organs stood in the midst of or were enmeshed within society, where they constituted—tellingly—a 'public power [*öffentliche Gewalt*]' and even a 'judicial power [*richterliche Gewalt*]'. Subsequently, Engels outlines the way such an approach may have been challenged by Roman conquests, by the medieval period's

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while absolute private property refers to the unqualified and absolute legal title to a thing (Johnston 1999, 56–58).

[26] Elsewhere, Engels traces the profound influence on the history of Europe from the time when the united German tribes threw the Romans back across the Rhine (Engels 1882e, 319–331; 1882f, 19–33).

[27] These were gathered in six volumes by Jacob Grimm and others in the nineteenth century (Grimm et al. 1840–1863).

imposition of feudal systems, by self-serving clergy, princes and nobles, and by the towns that arose and overtook the importance of villages, to the point where the common oral laws were written down in the *Weisthümer*. Yet he insists that the Mark organisation, with its extraordinary capacity for adaption to different conditions, has 'struck such deep roots [*tiefe Wurzeln*] into the whole life of the Germans, that we find its trace [*Spur*] at every step and turn in the historical development of our people' (Engels 1882a, 636; 1882b, 448).

It is precisely this reality that Engels seeks to recover for the communist project, but not without two dialectical turns. The first concerns the results of three French revolutions (1789, 1830 and 1848), and with them finally a revolution of sorts in Germany, in which all of the feudal bonds were cast aside as if overnight. The peasant was once again 'free', a 'lord of his own holding', but it was such a paltry outcome—with minuscule holdings, scraps of common forest as left-overs from the Mark, and subject to the tax-collector, mortgage holder and depredations of capitalism and large-scale agriculture—that such freedom means only one thing: that the peasants are at last able to act to improve their own conditions, along with the workers.

5.4.3 The Mark: Aufhebung

This point brings us to the next and final dialectical turn:

> But how? – By means of a rebirth [*Wiedergeburt*] of the mark, not in its old, outdated [*überlebten*] form, but in a rejuvenated [*verjüngten*] form: by a renewal [*Erneuerung*] of common landownership [*Bodengemeinschaft*][28] under which the latter would not only provide the small-peasant community with all the prerogatives of big farming and the use of agricultural machinery, but will also give them means to organise, along with agriculture, major industries utilising steam and water power, and to organise them without capitalists by the community itself (Engels 1891a, 330; 1882b, 456).[29]

This quotation should lay to rest any notion that Engels's seeks a secular version of the biblical 'return to Paradise', or indeed that he hankers for a version of a 'rural socialism' that sought to turn back the clock to medieval times. Instead, he offers a full dialectical transformation of the Mark in light of communism.[30] This would include the basic element of what is, literally, a 'soil community [*Bodengemeinschaft*]' or,

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[28] *Bodengemeinschaft* is, literally, a soil community.

[29] This final section first appeared in the edition published in *Sozialdemokrat* in 1883. It appeared in all subsequent editions, including the 1891 appendix to the German edition of *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*. Since this final section does not appear in the text provided by MEGA (I.27), I have quoted from the *Werke*, which provides the 1891 edition.

[30] See also the wonderful instance of dialectical analysis in *The Origin of the Family*, where it is precisely the 'barbaric' practice of the German Mark that offer a way forward out of the dead-end of 'civilisation' (Engels 1892a, 251–253; 1892b, 254–256). Another version of this dialectic appears in Engels's 1891a, 1891b introduction to Marx's *The Civil War in France*. In light of the Paris commune, Engels offers a narrative of the state in three stages: an original situation in which the organs of governance were enmeshed within society; an aberration running against people's wishes, in which the state became separated from society; a dialectical recovery of the initial impulse and

more fully, common land ownership, along with the latest technological means for big farming and higher yields.[31] We should add the communist *Aufhebung* of baseline democracy and governance, in which the administrative, judicial and governing organs stand in the midst of society. But why does Engels not use the philosophical terminology of *Aufhebung* in this conclusion, preferring the terminology of rebirth (*Wiedergeburt*) and rejuvenation (*Verjüngung*)? The reason is that he was writing for a wide and popular audience, especially the peasants, whom he and his comrades in the German Social-Democratic Party sought to attract. The opening and especially the closing sentences of this piece make this aim clear.

5.5 Conclusion: Enmeshed Governance

One of the outcomes of the research of the 1880s was that Engels modified slightly the historical schema first outlined in the opening sentences of the Communist Manifesto from 1848. Thus, in his preface to the 1888 English edition Engels mentions that human history is a history of class struggle, arising from economic realities, but with a crucial parenthetical qualification: 'the whole history of mankind (since the dissolution of primitive tribal society, holding land in common ownership) has been a history of class struggles, contests between exploiting and exploited, ruling and oppressed classes' (Engels 1888, 120). In other words, there was a period—a long period—of baseline communism that needed to be dissolved before class struggle could begin. And if there was no class struggle, then there was no state—as Engels had defined the state. Let us be clear: he does not say there were no classes, but only that there was no struggle, no antagonism between classes.

Nonetheless, this remains a historical point. I mentioned at the opening of this chapter that I set out to identify the philosophical insights that arise from Engels's historical and anthropological research. This is not simply because of the limitations in the material available to Engels (which he fully acknowledges), and not due to the misdirected attention given to his observations on the family in the book of the same name. Indeed, this work is primarily concerned with the state.

The philosophical points may be stated as follows. First, in any form of communist governance, public power is no longer to be separated from society. Further, public power continues, but now standing in the midst of society, inseparably enmeshed within society. Second, while public power continues, political character does not. This term has a specific sense in the work of both Engels and Marx: it characterises the nature of class struggle in the political arena. In other words, since the state arises from and is involved in class struggle, political character entails class

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desire, in which the organs of social organisation are enmeshed within society in a completely new way (Engels 1891b, 1891c).

[31] Precisely what Yuan Longping has enabled in China through his extraordinary innovations in hybrid rice and rice-growing techniques.

struggle. Thus, when public power loses its political character, we find the beginnings of non-political elections, an end to all manner of policies becoming political footballs, and so on. Third, the nature of governance becomes the administration of the stuff of life and managing economic production and distribution for the good of the community as a whole. That is, precisely through a non-politicised public power does it become possible to focus on the common good, to serve the community (as is the Chinese focus). Fourth, while the key insight from baseline communism is that public power and its various organs are in the midst of society, this requires a significant dialectical transformation (*Aufhebung*) that does not simply abolish all that has gone before and begins anew, but preserves and qualitatively transforms this baseline communism into full communism. (Parenthetically, this approach applies to elements from other eras of human societies.) Finally and as a consequence of Engels's suggestion concerning the *Aufhebung* of baseline communism, we are led to a point that becomes difficult to express in the standard terms derived from the Western liberal tradition: the very distinction between state and society begins to die away. Or, as Marx put it, summarising much of the work Engels had done up to that point: 'There will be no longer any government or state, distinct from society itself [*Dann wird es weder eine Regierung noch einen Staat geben, die im Gegensatz zur Gesellschaft selbst stehen*]!' (Marx 1872a, 62; 1872b, 136).

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Chapter 6
Conclusion: What is in a Name?

Abstract The concluding observations address three questions. The first concerns the nature of the actual experience of socialist governance in many parts of the world and the rich theoretical developments in light of such experience. I have not addressed these at any length, since that would be another study and my concern has been on what Engels himself wrote. Second, I ask what the appropriate terminology might be for the forms of governance during socialist construction. A number of candidates arise from Engels's texts, whether social organisation, community, association, or apparatus, but I have preferred the neutral terminology of 'enmeshed governance'. Finally, I address the limits to what Engels (and Marx) could propose in light of the absence of the actual experience of socialism in power and the exercise of governance. While Marx warned that such matters could be known 'only scientifically', Engels provided a number of key principles: de-politicised public power that stands in the midst of society and focuses on the administration on the stuff of life for the good of the community. But these principles are by no means fixed, for they undergo constant change and transformation.

Keywords Practice of socialist governance · Terminology · Not a 'state' · A work in progress

6.1 Socialist Governance in Practice

I will keep the conclusion brief, since a relatively full summary of each chapter may be found in the book's introduction. Instead, I address three questions. First, why have I not provided treatments of later situations of the actual construction of socialism? This would have included treatments of developments in Russia, Eastern Europe, the Caribbean, Latin America, Africa, Eastern Asia, and so on. It would include careful analysis of the thought of leaders from Lenin to Xi Jinping, as well as the many scholarly works and empirical research results. Obviously, such a study would have become somewhat longer and would be a rather different project (I have, in fact, undertaken a study of the Chinese situation in the final chapters of a work entitled *Socialism with Chinese Characteristics—A Guide for Foreigners* [Boer 2021,

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165–272]). More importantly, I have sought not to import into this study of Engels material from later times. That later scholars and leaders engaged intensively with Engels's work is a historical fact, seeing him as a gateway to Marx, but they were also involved in very different conditions that Engels and Marx could not foresee. Instead, my purpose has been to exegete Engels's texts with relevance to the state and what socialist governance might be.

6.2 What Should We Call These New Political Forms?

Second and in light of the fifth chapter, what should we call the new formations that Engels—and Marx at times—sought to outline? That there would be significant and highly complex functions of organisation and administration is obvious by now, arguably even more complex than former types of organisation. But the new formation cannot be called a state, at least in in terms of Engels's work.

One option is to say that Engels and Marx could not foresee that some type of state would emerge, a socialist state, which would not be the same as a bourgeois state, or indeed any other state that had appeared in human history. Lenin was the first to speak of such a 'proletarian state', while Stalin spoke of a 'socialist state' of the type that had never been seen before in human history. I have from time to time been drawn to such a position in light of later developments (Boer 2017). But in this study I have sought to stay close to the way Engels develops his position. Indeed, Engels himself uses a number of terms, such as social organisation or organisation of society. In German: *Gesellschaftsorganisation* (Engels 1892a, 195; 1892b, 190), *gesellschaftliche Organisation* (Engels 1892a, 203; 1892b, 200), *die Organisation einer Gesellschaft* (Engels 1892a, 204; 1892b, 201). Another candidate is 'administration', the usual English rendering of *Verwaltung*—as in the 'administration of the stuff of life'. In German this is '*die Verwaltung von Sachen* or *Dingen*', or in the French '*l'administration des choses*' (Engels 1880, 576). It also includes the semantic fields of management and stewardship.

Elsewhere, Engels suggests *Gemeinwesen*: 'We would therefore suggest that *Gemeinwesen* be universally substituted for state; it is a good old German word that can very well do service for the French "Commune"' (Engels 1875a, 7; 1875b, 71). As we saw earlier, the Chinese translation of this term is *gongtongti* (共同体), usually connected with *fuwu* (服务), to be of service to the *gongtongti*. Closely related is an 'association', as we find in the Communist Manifesto: 'In place of the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonisms, we shall have an association [*Assoziation*], in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all' (Marx and Engels 1848a, 482; 1848b, 506). Or as Engels's well-known fragment puts it: 'The association of the future will combine the rationality of the latter with the old ones' concern for the social welfare of all, and thus fulfil its purpose [*Die Assoziation der Zukunft wird die Nüchternheit der letzteren*

vereinigen mit der Sorge für die gemeinsame gesellschaftliche Wohlfahrt der alten und dadurch ihren Zweck erfüllen]' (Engels 1884a, 23; 1884b, 553).[1]

It may also be possible to use 'apparatus', which, when the separated public power of the state is no more, becomes a rather different reality, more in line with social organisation and administration. But I have preferred to use the English terminology of 'enmeshed governance', for 'governance' is more neutral than the problematic German *Regierung* with its senses of command and rule. Enmeshed governance is my preference, especially in light of the Chinese *zhili* (治理), which brings us closer to administration, guidance and direction. Ultimately, it is not so much the name that matters, but the reality itself.

6.3 A Work in Progress

Finally, how much could Engels and indeed Marx know of what was to come? Obviously they were not clairvoyants, were not able to gaze into the future, especially the future of the actual construction of socialist governance. As Marx pointed out, such a situation can be studied only on the basis of actual experience, 'only scientifically [*nur wissenschaftlich*]' (Marx 1875a, 22; 1875b, 95). Or, as Engels had observed a few years earlier, it was not their task to create utopian systems for the future of society: 'To attempt to answer such a question in advance and for all cases would be utopia-making, and that I leave to others' (Engels 1872–1873a, 21, 77; 1872–1873b, 330, 386). At the same time, it is problematic to insist too much on the difference between their thoughts and plans and the realities that followed, for then we end up with too large a break, too much of a gap that becomes difficult to bridge. Indeed, I have found in this study that Engels in particular produced from his work a number of rather profound principles for what the enmeshed governance of socialism might be—albeit always understood in the sense that they should be seen as a guide for action rather than a dogma. And these principles have indeed stood the test of time. To reiterate the principles:

(1) Public power (*Gewalt*) continues but loses its 'political character'.
(2) Governance entails the administration of things and the management of the processes of production for the sake of the true interests of society.
(3) The many organs of governance would not be separated from society but stand in the midst of society.
(4) This reality may be seen as a dialectical transformation, an *Aufhebung* of baseline communism.

How many of these principles can we see emerging in socialist countries today? Are there already somewhat non-politicised elections and democratic practices? Are organs of governance enmeshed within society more than standing separated from

[1] For those who can read Chinese, the translation is: '未来的联合体将把后者的清醒同古代联合体对共同的社会福利的关心结合起来, 并且这样来达到自己的目的' (Engels 1884c, 447).

society? Are there practices of grassroots consultative democracy taking place as I write? In asking these questions, I have in mind the fact—emphasised especially by Losurdo (2017)—that the transitional phase of socialism is a long process indeed. This means that the emergence of the full features of socialist and indeed communist governance will take a long time. But they will also not suddenly appear, for one can begin to see certain features even now. In the current context, I am particularly interested in this question: can we already see how a socialist system focuses on the administration of things and the management of the processes of production for the sake of the true interests of society? The ability of socialist countries to manage and contain the COVID-19 pandemic should provide a clear to this question. Thus, we found that production can be redirected for—in this case—medical purposes, governance moves swiftly and decisively, and there is widespread social cooperation for the sake of the 'public good'. In China, it is summed up as a 'people first' philosophy, or, more fully, the policies are developed and enacted 'according to the people as centre [*yi renmin wei zhongxin*]'.

At the same time, a socialist system is itself always a work in progress, and on this note it is appropriate to leave the last word to Engels:

> So-called 'socialist society' is not, in my view, to be regarded as something that remains crystallised for all time [*allemal fertiges Ding*], but rather being in process of constant change and transformation [*in fortwährender Verändrung und Umbildung*] like all other social conditions (Engels 1890a, 447; 1890b, 18).

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